NUMBER 22

$1.50

THE SPACE GAMER

FOR CREATIVE ADVENTURES

in this issue

ICE WAR Units & Tactics

Party Brawl

Three Words

THE SPACE GAMER

FOR CREATIVE ADVENTURES

MARCH- APRIL, No. 22, 1979

IN THIS ISSUE

5 *ICE WAR--UNIT ANALYSIS & TACTICS* * *Tony Watson*
Detailed look at a great simulation

10 *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST* * *Scot F. Bayless*
BLACK HOLE in the balance

13 *SUBMISSION IMPOSSIBLE* * *Glenn L. Williams*
How to write that wargaming article

15 *PARTY BRAWL* * *Paul Wagner*
WIZARD meets the Frats at Delta House

20 *THREE WORDS* * *Brian McCue*
A short story

24 *MERCENARY* * *Tony Watson*
A review

26 *SPELLMAKER & QUEST* * *Norman S. Howe*
Two reviews

DEPARTMENTS

WHERE WE'RE GOING 3
1978 FEEDBACK RESULTS 18
NEWS & PLUGS 27
LETTERS 30

Art in this issue:

Joseph Littlejohn ..... *cover*
Robert Phillips *3*
Peter Daglio *13*
Doug Potter *15, 16, 17*
Robert Manns *21, 22, 26*
Mitch O'Connell *25*
Kevin Shaughnessy *28*

THE LAST WORD

A quick glance at this issue will tell you we have changed type faces for this issue and from now on. For those that are interested, we have gone from 10 pt. to 8 pt. This will account for about 15% to 18% more material. There is one more page of advertising, so the net gain for readers is about 10% We hope you will like our newer look. In the long haul, the smaller type will allow us to bring longer, more detailed articles to you. The ICE WAR article is a good example of the lengthly material which will become more frequent in TSG.

Back issues are still available from TSG No. 13 up. Cost is $1.50 each. Many people have asked about issues before No. 13. At some point in the future, Metagaming will publish a single volume which will contain all the material from out-of-print issues. Until then, collectors have an edge. This is one of the main reasons we stress buying back issues now. When they are gone, they're gone.

We have caught up some with this TSG. We hope to catch up more, and finally be on schedule by 1980. We are doing everything possible to make this pipe dream come true. Send us your articles; we need more material in 1979 than ever.

C. Ben Ostrander
editor

Howard Thompson
publisher

Karol Sandberg
Donna Baker
copy editors

Steve Jackson
contributing editor

Robert Taylor
news editor

Tracy Valentine
Kim Falke
subscriptions

THE SPACE GAMER is published bi-monthly by Metagaming. 3100- A Industrial Terrace, Austin, TX 78759. SUBSCRIPTION information, changes of address, orders, etc., to Metagaming, P.O. Box 15346, Austin, TX 78761.

All material copyright © 1979 by THE SPACE GAMER. All rights reserved for material accepted for publication unless initially specified and agreed otherwise.

News items and product announcements subject to editorial whim. SUBSCRIPTIONS: six issues, $8; twelve issues, $15. Base rate for unsolicited manuscripts is one cent per word; they must be typed, double spaced, and contain return postage. Base rate for art is $20 per average page size; interior art should be black ink on heavy white paper. Application to mail at second-class rates is pending at Austin, Texas.

Where We're Going

WHEN WE GOT THERE

April 12, 1979 will live as Black Passover in Metagaming's history.

Thursday morning saw the delivery of the long-delayed STELLAR CONQUEST and GODSFIRE boxes and counter sheets. Original delivery had been for late January. Joy reigned for a full fifteen minutes after unloading. Then, ... then we looked at what we'd put out good money for.

The boxes were too small. Yep, too small for the components to fit in properly. Also, the boxes weren't the style we'd been shown as mockups. They were a much less satisfactory design which would most likely come undone in transit. As if this weren't enough, we sampled the counters, in suitable statistical fashion. A full 96% had cuts on crucial lettering and/or had large areas not fully die-cut through.

These products will never be shipped. Most likely we'll end up in court over the matter. Metagaming's growth has been set back a full six to eight months. We will not pass on crap to our customers, under any circumstance.

REFUNDS

Refund checks will be mailed to all who've ordered these games. Please tell anyone you know not to order. We cannot project a date or form for release of these games at this time.

HOLY WAR and INVASION OF THE AIR EATERS will not be affected by the box/counter foul-up. They will be ready for shipping by the time you read this. Fortunately, they are made by our long time, reliable supplier. THE FANTASY TRIP: In The Labyrinth may be affected. It was to be in the same style box from the same manufacturer. We should be able to tell you more by the next issue of THE SPACE GAMER.

The most frustrating thing to us is that, in hindsight, we did everything possible to insure getting satisfactory components. If you ordered an elephant, checked the photos and specs, and then got a hippopotomus you have some idea what happened to us. Such goofs happen frequently in business, a fact we accept. To have a bigger, more harmful goof would be hard to imagine.

Don't worry about the health of Metagaming. Our policy of not borrowing money means our financial condition is only affected in terms of lost growth. Only boxed games will be affected. If we lived on borrowed money, as my professors used to insistently advise, this problem could have resulted in insolvency.

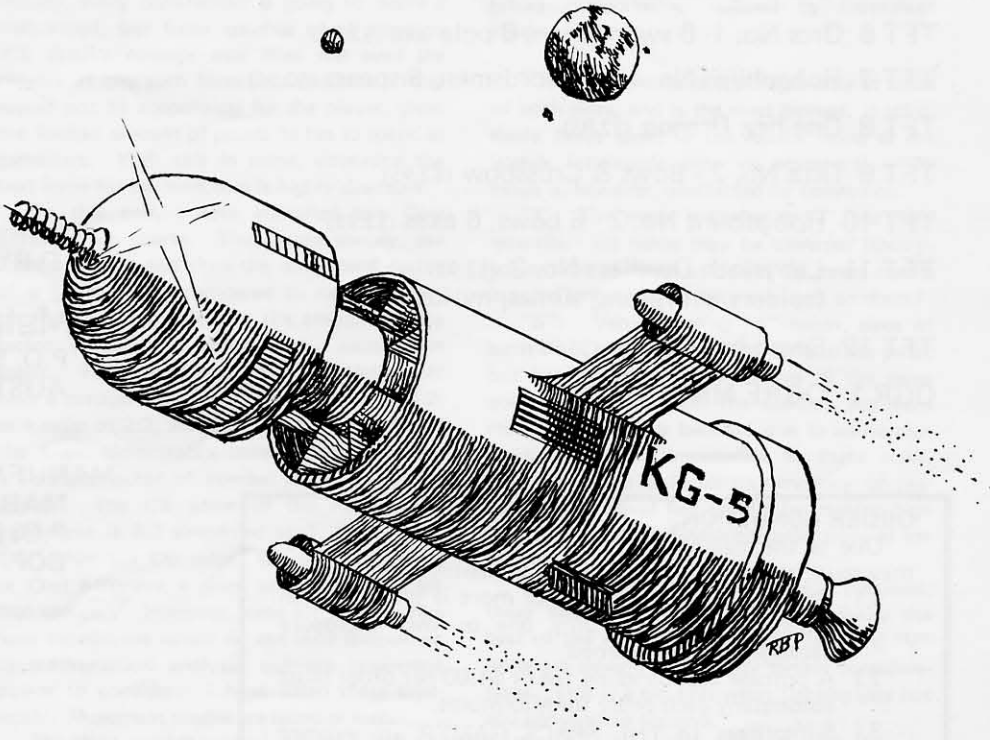
Those who are new to THE SPACE GAMER may wonder at this open discussion of what could be regarded as a purely operational problem. We think of our customers in the same category as financial backers. We don't borrow money, but we do get our financing from you. You deserve to know what's happening. You deserve to know why things do or don't get done. If we don't get a game out because we just don't get our work done we've said so. TFT: In The Labyrinth is a good example. It is mostly late due to us, despite how massive the project turned out when we got into it. HYMENOPTERA is the same way. It is my design and has been half finished for a long time. We also think you deserve to know when we come up short for reasons beyond our control. It is much better than just saying, "Oh, it's going to be late." It's also better than pretending we're perfect.

Let's see, any good news? We have 50% more hobby distributors than we did three months ago. And, most of the new ones are bigger than our old average. This means more and more stores will be carrying our products. Metagaming will grow this year despite the boxes.

What else? Well, according to recently published data our paid circulation is moving in on THE DRAGON. One goal for THE SPACE GAMER in the slick format was to gain greater acceptance than our most logical competitor. I expect that TSR Hobbies will be looking hard at THE DRAGON for ways to improve quality and circulation. The resultant competition could make these two publications the second and third largest simulation gaming magazines in a year or so.

Things will look up. Let's see, pay taxes in April, move the business in May, find new box supplier, find new counter supplier, computerize mailing lists, work on game projects, train new employees, etc., etc.

Howard Thompson



THE FANTASY TRIP Microtures are made for use with Metagaming's THE FANTASY TRIP game system. Each package of Microtures is an assortment of quality metal fantasy figures. These figures are used to represent the heroes, heroines, fighters, wizards, sentients, monsters and animals from THE FANTASY TRIP.

THE FANTASY TRIP Microtures are supplied with optional hex bases. The hex bases are compatible with the facing and movement requirements of THE FANTASY TRIP combat system. When glued to the hex bases the figures are ready for fantasy adventure.

Metagaming already has several games published in THE FANTASY TRIP series.

THE FANTASY TRIP: MELEE $2.95 - man to man combat

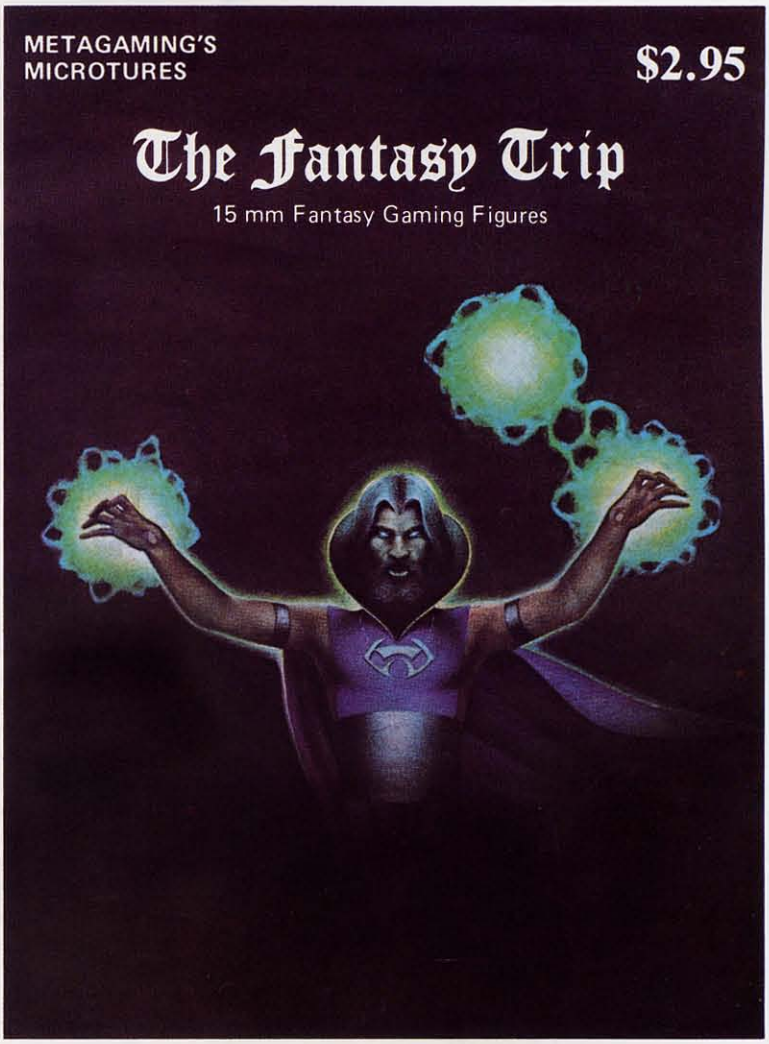
THE FANTASY TRIP: WIZARD $3.95 - magical combat

THE FANTASY TRIP: DEATH TEST $2.95 - an adventure

To be published in the near future are the Game Master's rule module for adventure campaigns.

THE FANTASY TRIP: IN THE LABYRINTH

While intended for use with THE FANTASY TRIP these Microtures are suitable for use with any fantasy game that uses figures. They are also useful, without bases, on terrain boards as fantasy armies.



TFT 1 Heroes & Heroines ($2.95)

TFT 2 Heroes & Magic Users ($2.95)

TFT 3 The Dwarves ($2.95)

TFT 4 Elves ($2.95)

TFT 5 Labyrinth Dwellers No.1 ($2.95)
(giant, ogre, bear, wolves, gargoyles)

TFT 6 Orcs No. 1- 6 swordsmen, 6 pole axe ($2.95)

TFT 7 Hobgoblins No. 1 - 6 swordsmen, 6 spears ($2.95)

TFT 8 One-hex Dragon ($2.95)

TFT 9 Orcs No. 2 - Bows & Crossbow ($2.95)

TFT 10 Hobgoblins No. 2 - 6 bows, 6 axes ($2.95)

TFT 11 Labyrinth Dwellers No. 2 ($2.95)
(spiders, scorpions, slimes, molds)

TFT 12 Seven-hex Dragon ($7.95)

OGR 1 OGRE MK *V* *($6.95)*

ORDER CONDITIONS

Due to the mailing weight of these Mircoture packages, they must be ordered subject to the following conditions:

1.) Three Microture packages or more is the minimum order. Orders for only one or two Microture packages will be returned.
2.) A postage and handling fee of $1.00 per order must accompany each order for Microtures.
3.) Subscribers to THE SPACE GAMER are exempt from the $1.00 postage and handling fee.

SOLD BY:

Metagaming
P.O. BOX 15346
AUSTIN, TX 78761

MANUFACTURED UNDER LICENSE BY:
MARTIAN METALS
P.O. BOX 947
COPPERAS COVE, TX 76522

ICE WAR

unit analysis & tactics

by

Tony Watson

If the truth is to be known, I must confess to not being particularly excited when my copy of ICE WAR arrived. Oh, sure, there was the normal bit of excitement every gamer feels when receiving a new game, but the subject matter of ICE WAR had not really grabbed my imagination. SF games are spaceships and the like to me. ICE WAR dealt with a subject all too plausible and frighteningly near at hand. Even after reading the rules, I noted simply that the game appeared to be well put together and possessed a good, solid set of rules, which, if not highly innovative, certainly seemed to fit the situation. In short, while fulfilling the high standards the MicroGame series has set for itself, ICE WAR didn't look to be a game I, personnally, would become enamored with.

It was silly of me to make such hasty assumptions. Every good gamer knows that the proof is in the play. A few games of ICE WAR brought my opinions around in a hurry. Not only is ICE WAR straight forward and fast, it is, in my assessment, the finest tactical exercise in the MicroGame line since the granddaddy of 'em all, OGRE.

If you don't already know, ICE WAR simulates an attack by the Eurasian Socialist Alliance on the last remaining American oil production area, Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, in the year 2007. The ESA attacks with a force of hovercraft, sleds, infantry and tanks, while the US player defends with a similar, but more limited force mix. Both sides have nuclear missiles which, if used successfully, automatically destroy all units in the target hex and convert the terrain: either from ice to water, or tundra to mud. Since each type of units has restrictions on the type of terrain it can move in, and, because it is the only way to destroy oil well hexes, conversion is a very important aspect of the game.

The ESA player has a special advantage in that he may choose to include a command sled in his force makeup. This vehicle, because of elaborate ECM equipment, prevents itself and those units stacked with it from being seen (placed on the map) by the opposition until spotted. Spotting occurs when the sled moves adjacent to any US units, within two hexes of an outpost, or is in the area of special, search satellites.

At the beginning of the game, both players choose their forces from the available counter mix and "pay for" their selections with the thirty points given at the beginning of the scenario for this purpose. Because of the difference between the various units available, in both combat value and mobility, this is one of, if not the most important phase of the game.

UNITS

Selecting a force in ICE WAR is one of the most challenging aspects of the game. Part of the game's appeal is the diverse, yet complimentary nature of the assorted unit types available. Choosing the right mix is a crucial factor. One must select pieces to both accomplish one's own goal, and effectively counter the opposition's force mix. In addition, the variance in mobility of the unit types chosen will largely decide the tactics used. Tactical doctrine must be matched by units capable of performing that doctrine. If not, the net result will be failure.

There are four main criteria to judge units by: 1) combat factor, 2) movement factor, 3) movement mode and 4) point cost. Obviously, every commander is going to desire a well-armed, fast force capable of all terrains. ICE WAR's counter mix does not avail the players of any such force of superunits. They would not be economical for the player, given the limited amount of points he has to spend at gamestart. With this in mind, obtaining the best force for the least cost is highly desirable.

To this end, I have compiled two Cost Effectiveness charts. They work simply; the combat factor and then the movement factor of a given unit is compared to its point cost to yield a ratio reflecting the amount of the factor in question obtained for each point spent. For example, ESA Light Hovercraft have a combat value of 2 and a point cost of 2, or a ratio of 2:2, simplified to 1:1. The CE of the Light Hovercraft's combat factor is thus 1 (or one factor of combat power per point spent). The CE value of the Hovercraft's movement is 6:2 simplified to 3. Obviously, the higher the CE value, the more desirable, or Cost Effective, a given unit is, at least for that category. However, some specialized units have capabilities which do not lend themselves to mathematical analysis, but are important points to consider. I have listed these separately. Movement modes are listed as well.

The chart provides some interesting analysis. Note the balance in the units; those which have low CE values for movement are compensated by having special capabilities. Some units which have high values are limited in other ways. For example, infantry and tanks, both offer a "big bang for the buck", suffer considerable restriction because of their movement modes which pretty much limit them to the Alaska hexes of the map.

Now, while the CE charts offer some guideline as to what a player is receiving for the points he is shelling out, high CE values are hardly the only criteria to look at. Sometimes the special abilities far outweigh superior CE values; Armored Sleds may be excellent fighting vehicles, but that means little if you are trying to transport a tank unit to Alaska's north slope. Movement mode is also an important consideration. While the CE values of an ESA Sled Transport may compare favorably with those of a Hovercraft Transport, the superior mobility of the H mode may make all the difference in combat situation.

Before examining the individual units, it might be appropriate to take a look at the broad categories as defined by movement mode.

"T": This mode is applicable only to tanks of both sides, and is the most limited. It effectively holds tanks to the Alaska hexes or the islands (attainable only via transport). "T" mode is, however, uneffected by conversion.

"I": This mode is similar to "T', but more versatile. Ice hexes may be traversed (though conversion of these occupied ice hexes results in some embarrassment for the units on them.)

"S": Vehicles using "S" mode, sleds of both sides, have fine mobility early in the game, but become increasingly limited as the game goes on. The thicker the combat, the more restricted the sleds become, due to conversion rendering a hex impassable to these units. Sleds have the unfortunate tendency of rendering themselves less mobile by making high odds attacks (and obtaining conversions as the by product).

"H" and "V": For all practical purposes, these two modes are the same. Easily the best of the modes in the game, "H" and "V" units are never restricted by terrain considerations. This is a big plus when fighting gets hot and conversions abound.

The CE charts and the discussion of movement modes have pointed out some of the

COST EFFECTIVENESS CHART: US UNITS

Unit	Combat	Movement	Special
Tank (T)	3	1.5	
Infantry (I)	4	1	
Outpost (I)	1	—	detection range of 2
Hovercraft (H)	1	2	transport unit
Recon Sled (S)	.5	3	
VERTOL (V)	—	10	transport unit
Orbital Weapons Platform	—	—	allows for missile fire at any hex
Recon Satellite	—	—	uses search area anywhere
Missile	.33/Elim	—	auto destruction anywhere

COST EFFECTIVENESS CHART: ESA UNITS

UNIT	COMBAT	MOVEMENT	SPECIAL
Command Sled (S)	1	4	secret movement and coordinated attacks
Missile Sled(S)	.5	1	fire missile up to 4 hexes
Sled Transport (S)	2	4	transport unit
Armored Sled (S)	2.5	2	
Hovercraft Trans (H)	1	4	transport unit
Armored Hovercraft (H)	1.5	2	
Light Hovercraft (H)	1	3	
Tank (T)	3	1.5	
Infantry	4	1	
Missile	.5/Elim	—	auto destruction anywhere

things players should look at when selecting units. Now it seems appropriate to make a more detailed survey of the individual units, focusing on their strengths and weaknesses, as well as, their optimum function in the game.

USA UNITS

INFANTRY

Strengths: combat factor, cost. Weakness: speed.

Infantry has the highest CE for combat of any unit in the game, and thus make for cheap but powerful pieces. Their only drawback is lack of speed. For the US player, this is minimized. The proper role of US infantry is guarding the oil well hexes. In this situation, their lack of speed does not really matter since they can be setup near wells initially. In fact, infantry is ideally suited to come in as reinforcements since Deadhorse is within three hexes of every well hex. There is no better bargain, and they are not usually employed until late in the game.

TANKS

Strengths: combat factor, speed. Weakness: mobility.

Tanks go hand in hand with infantry as the main line of defense once the ESA lands in Alaska. Their high speed allows them to move out quickly and guard flanks against landing, but still speed back to meet any threats in the center. Their potent combat value, the highest in the game, gives them 2-1 odds or better against all ESA vehicles other than armored sleds or other tanks. Like the infantry, tanks make excellent reinforcements; their poor mobility type means they would probably wait around until the ESA assault begins anyway.

OUTPOSTS

Strengths: detection radius. Weaknesses: combat and movement factors.

Outposts are good for one thing only---spotting. They should always be chosen as part of the initial US force. Bringing them in after the ESA force has been spotted and real fighting has begun, is a waste. The US player should always take advantage of the special rule allowing forward deployment of Outposts to station two or three in a cordon three hexes apart. They'll automatically see any ESA force trying to slip through, or force the opposition to detach units to dispense with them. Who knows, maybe they'll even force an exchange.

HOVERCRAFT

Strengths: combat factor, mobility. Weakness: none.

Because they are the only fully mobile combat unit in the game for the US player, Hovercraft handle the bulk of the fighting until the ESA makes its assault on Alaska. Even then, their utility is often apparent. While not quite the match of the most ESA combat vehicles, they make fine delaying units. Their fairly strong combat factor can often force the ESA to attack at odds which may yield exchanges. Remember, they can transport units and make good shuttles for tanks or infantry.

RECON SLEDS

Strengths: speed. Weakness: combat value.

The fastest US combat unit, Recon Sleds are good for delaying the ESA advance early in the game, or for carrying out "active reconnaissance", moving through suspected occupied hexes. Recon Sleds find their greatest utility early in the game, and should always be chosen initially, not as reinforcements. Once heavy fighting begins, speed is not nearly the factor it is earlier. Their low combat value often nets a short life expectancy.

VERTOLs

Strengths: speed and mobility. Weakness: combat factor.

VERTOLs are the best transport units in the game. Their high speed allows them to make two of three trips in a single turn, if the distance is short enough. If the US wants to pursue a strong forward defense early in the game, VERTOLs are necessary to shuttle the units forward. Remember, VERTOLs may not carry tanks.

RECON SATELLITES

Strengths: detection zone, range. Weakness: combat factor.

Recon Satellites are the units most likely to spot the ESA forces in the first crucial turns. Unlike Sleds or Outposts, Satellites can never be destroyed, and are always available for searching. However, once the ESA is spotted, the Recon Sats are useless. This makes the purchase of even two of three a highly questionable strategy, because of their high cost.

ORBITAL WEAPONS PLATFORMS

Strength: missile fire, range. Weakness: cost, combat factor.

The high costs of OWPs makes having more than one or two pretty much impossible. They are the most expensive unit the USA can purchase, but have no intrinsic value. Their importance lies in their ability to fire missiles, the potentially strongest weapon in the game.

MISSILE

Strengths: range, attack capability. Weakness: none.

Missiles are very nice weapons; they can strike anywhere, are very effective if the attack goes through since they destroy any and all units in the target hex, and lastly, they are very cheap. While there is a two-thirds chance the missile attack will fail due to ESA anti-missile capabilities, little is risked by such an attack since no friendly units are committed. The rewards are substantial. Missiles are good for taking pot shots at the ESA, especially the Command Sled. This discourages the enemy from stacking. Missiles are also good for converting hexes. Their low cost means one or two points only need be spent to net a very effective force.

ESA UNITS

COMMAND SLED

Strength: special abilities. Weakness: combat factor.

Put simply, a Command Sled is an absolute must. The ESA player who doesn't take the Command Sled is very foolish indeed. Since the Sled keeps those units stacked with it from being spotted, it ususally gives the ESA player a few turns of approach before the missiles fall and the US begins bringing in reinforcements. In addition to the secrecy the Command Sled affords, it also must be present for ESA units to make combined attacks at full odds from two or more hexes. Loss of the Sled means mass attacks at lower than normal odds, or bunching together in stacks and inviting a calamity.

Command Sleds should always be kept well away from the fighting and shielded by ZPCs if necessary. If the US player is allowed to attack with missiles, the ESA player's anti-missile system will provide better defense than allowing the Sled to be engaged in combat. Its poor defense value will almost certainly lead to its demise.

MISSILE SLED

Strength: missile fire. Weakness: cost.

Missile Sleds are the most costly items the ESA can buy, but are potentially the most powerful. Only they can fire missiles; the game's deadliest weapons. Compared to the US OWPs, Sleds are at a disadvantage. Their range is effectively limited to five hexes, and, because they are on the board, they are subject to attack and destruction before their missiles can be fired. Still, one or two make a nice addition to a force. If close enough, they can stand behind the main line of battle and lob missiles into oil hexes. Once their missiles are expended, they make moderately strong combat units.

MISSILES

Strengths: range, attack capability. Weakness: none.

Most of what has been said under US Missiles applies here save for one very important difference. Due to the US anti-missile power, ESA missiles have a range of only five hexes, far below that of their USA counterparts. But, at close range (three hexes or less), they are more likely to hit.

Preemption is another factor to worry about. Because they are mounted of sleds, Missiles are subject to destruction before they are even fired. Range limitations and vulnerability make Missiles a little less important to the ESA than they are to the US.

SLED TRANSPORT

Strengths: combat factor. Weakness: mobility.

Sled transports make useful transport units, since their high combat value allows them to double as attack craft. They make moderately strong combat units and are a good choice to spend a point on, even if you have nothing for them to carry. Unfortunately, Sleds can easily be stymied by a few conversions. This takes on added dimensions when the object is landing tanks and troops on the Alaska hexes.

ARMORED SLED

Strength: attack factor. Weakness: mobility.

Every ESA player's favorite, the Armored Sled offers single unit fire power which surpassed only by Tanks. Sleds working in tandem with each other or Armored Hovercrafts, can usually destroy any opposing vehicles and make a good show against infantry and tanks. Two Sleds together cause automatic conversion. This is useful if you can get next to an oil hex. At the same time, this massive firepower is a drawback. Each time an Armored Sled fires, it has a 50% chance of converting the hex, and possibly blocking its on path of advance.

HOVERCRAFT TRANSPORT

Strength: mobility. Weakness: combat factor.

Hovercraft Transports are the inverse of their Sled counterparts: excellent mobility, but poor combat power. These units should avoid all combat until after they have unloaded their cargos. Then, they can flit around as they wish, attacking what their light attack capability will allow. Their excellent mobility mode insures that the units they carry will get to their destinations despite conversions.

ARMORED HOVERCRAFT

Strengths: combat factor, mobility. Weakness: none.

Armored Hovercraft are an all around unit with good combat ability and all the advantages of the "H" mode of movement. These units often form the core of many ESA force mixes. Since they have the speed and mobility to get just about anywhere and wreak considerable havoc once they arrive. It is interesting to note that, firing alone, they still have a 1/3 chance of converting a hex.

LIGHT HOVERCRAFT

Strengths: speed, mobility. Weakness: none.

Being fast has its advantages and these units are amply suited for zipping ahead of the main body and destroying Outposts and other screening forces. Their speed and mobility make them excellent units for flanking manuevers or rushing ahead for pot shots at oil hexes. However, once engaged with the main US force, they are not long for their world.

TANKS

Strengths: speed, combat factor, point cost. Weakness: mobility.

As mentioned previously, Tanks are good firepower bargains. They're just the unit the ESA needs to handle the slugfest which begins when the ESA lands in Alaska and heads for those oil well hexes. Unfortunately, they must be carried to Alaska to be effective, and therein lies the rub. Still, they are the best available for the heavy fighting; their combat factor is high and they are not hampered by any conversions which might take place in their path. Firing alone, a Tank units has a 2/3s chance to cause a conversion in a target hex, which is good to know if you can get them around the oil fields.

INFANTRY

Strengths: combat factor, cost. Weakness: speed.

As with Tanks, the Achilles' heel of infantry is the fact it must be transported. Still, with their high CE value for combat, they are invaluable for the rough fighting around the wells late in the game. Their low cost, coupled with that of their carrier, makes including them in a force mix fairly easy. Speed, or lack thereof, hurts the ESA player more, since he is usually forced to land on the flanks and advance slowly. Infantry can be used on ice, but even if an attack against them fails, the resulting conversion might do them in.

TACTICS

As I said before, ICE WAR is an excellent tactical exercise. While a study of the game and some experience with it should yield some ideas as to the fundamentals of good play, the game (happily!) defies the perfect plan syndrome.

What follows are some observations made after 30+ games of ICE WAR. I don't pretend to know everything there is to know about the game; your own experiences with the game might have netted you some ideas which escaped me. I hope these tactical observations shed some light on the game for you.

Tactics will be determined by the forces selected. Any chance of success hinges on matching your objectives with a force capable of carrying them out.

While the preceeding portions of this article examined the individual units, putting these units together into a viable force is even more important. Individual strengths and weaknesses should be considered so the resulting set of units is well rounded, flexible, and tactically useful.

In selecting their force, the US player has the interesting option of taking some units as reinforcements, getting them for half price. However, reinforcements don't enter the game until after the ESA main body has been spotted, and then they suffer problems of delay and possible destruction in transit. Still, they are an excellent "buy", with reinforcement offering the US player an invaluable means of upgrading his force pool.

The low price of reinforcements may be too tempting for many players for them, years of always wishing for some way to get more units in other games may manifest itself in massive reinforcement selection. Be careful! Taking too many reinforcements will not leave a credible defense and spotting force initially. As a rule of thumb, no more than half, or fifteen points, should be used for reinforcements.

I have found choosing all of the infantry and tanks in the counter mix as reinforcements works well. Their very nature means they won't be used until late in the game anyway, and you receive more units for less outlay. In fact, the combined force is only eleven points for twenty-two units and 108 combat factors! VERTOLs and Hovercraft are also possible choices, but the former should only be chosen if you believe you will have the need to shuttle your infantry around a great deal.

Points not spent on reinforcement are, of course, used to purchase initially appearing units. The main objective of these forces is to spot the ESA main body, and then, delay it for as long as possible. Thus Recon Sleds and Hovercraft make good selections since they can go on the ice, meeting the invaders head on.

Outposts should only be chosen initially; they are wasted entirely if taken as reinforcements. Placed in hexes 0914, 1111, 1409, they form a cordon of search zones which can't fail to spot any incoming units. This positioning forces the ESA to go through the search zones and be spotted, or to peel off a unit or two (or even use missiles from Missile Sleds) to knock out an Outpost or two clearing a path. Having just two Outposts in any pair of the above mentioned hexes tends to channel the ESA advance and heightens the chance for spotting the main force with mobile units or Recon Sats. One or two Satellites are also helpful with their ability to search any seven hex area desired. Of course, one OWP stocked with two or three points worth of missiles is an essential.

Sleds and Hovercraft should be set up on the islands in order to get them to the front about half a move faster. Another effective ploy is to take one Tank in the initial force, setting it on one of the islands (Midway is best). Use it to convert the crucial "pass" hexes of 2122 and 2120 before the ESA player arrives. This makes these hexes impassable to all opposing units save hovercraft types and leaves the Tank in a good position for later combat situations.

The ESA player faces more varied choices in his selection of units. I have done some experimenting and found that a mixed force, with slight variations for taste and tactics, works best. All Hovercraft forces are too lightly armed, while an all Sled force is bogged down and blocked by conversions. Each type of unit has its purposes.

There is one cardinal rule I will suggest: *always* take a Command Sled. I can think of no better use of a point; the functions it performs are vital.

A good way to approach the problem of selecting a force is to divide the total available points roughly into thirds. One third should be devoted to heavy vehicles: the Command Sled, Armored Sleds and Missiles Sleds. For example: 1 Command Slde (1 pt.), 1 Missile Sled and 2 missiles (5 pts.) and 2 Armored Sleds equal 10 pts.

The second block of points should be spent on attack Hovercrafts. Roughly three to six Light or Armored Hovercrafts provide a fast mobile force, useful especially in fighting on the ice early in the game.

The remaining points can be spent on Infantry, Tanks and the Transports to carry them. Luckily these units are the least expensive and a fair amount can be obtained cheaply. A mix of 2 Infantry, 2 Tanks and 4 transport craft is only ten points. Depending on what you spent on Hovercraft, you'll have about eight to twelve points to spend. When selecting transport craft recall the advantages of Hovercraft. I've found a mix of Hovercraft to Sled Transports in a ratio of about 3-2 works very well.

Once units are selected, actual play begins. The course of the game can be divided into three distinct phases: 1) search, 2) ice skirmish and approach, and 3) main assault.

The search phase consists of those few turns during which the ESA force remains under the secrecy of the Command Sled. The goal of the US player is to spot the ESA main force as quickly as possible allowing reinforcement and missile fire to begin. The ESA aims are to avoid detection for as long as possible, advance as close as possible to the mainland, and, of course, delay as long as possible US reinforcements and missile fire.

US tactics in this phase will be determined by the surveillance setup. A "complete" surveillance setup of Satellites which will cover any given band of hexes across the board costs ten points---prohibitively high. A similar arrangement employing Outposts costs only three points. Outposts, though, are passive detectors; you must wait for the enemy to come to them. Satellites are active detectors because they can search anywhere desired. However, once the enemy is detected, Satellites are worthless since they have no ZOCs to delay units and no combat factor. Recon Sleds can delay, attack, and search actively for the enemy, but are liable (as are Outposts) to destruction by ESA units peeled off the main body for that purpose. A mixed force, again, seems to be the best answer. An Outpost or two, a Satellite and three or four mobile surface units allows the US player to take advantage of all the strengths each type provides. Outposts can be used to funnel the ESA advance down a specified corridor (or else force the ESA to reveal *some* of his units), mobile unit can set up an interlacing chain of ZOCs for both detection and delay, and Recon Sats can be used to search areas suspected of containing the ESA Command Sled and friends, but not searchable by other means.

The attacking ESA player wishes to circumvent all these elaborate surveillance efforts and get as far as possible onto the map before detection. This usually means moving at full speed, but don't hestitate to move just one or two hexes if it will help you dodge a Satellite search. It's often a good idea to dispatch one or two hovercraft from the main body to destroy any Outposts or mobile units the US has in your path. This will increase the area the US player has to search with other means, but mainly Satellites. Entering these "trailblazer" units separately from the Command Sled's shielded group, gives the enemy no clue as to the whereabouts of the main force. Separating them later gives the general location away. Save for attempting to destroy on-the-map-search units and dodging Satellite searches, there is little else the ESA player can do but trust to luck.

The ice skirmish and approach part of the game begins once the ESA main force is detected. The US player should seek to delay the ESA units as long as possible, giving reinforcements time to set up a strong defensive position. ESA forces will be spreading out and if a shot on the Command or Missile Sleds presents itself, take it. Missile fire should have targets in the following priority: 1- Missile Sled, 2- Command Sled, 3- Transports and 4- Armored Sled. The advantages of knocking out the first two are obvious. Transports are targetted simply because their passengers are more vulnerable when loaded.

The main idea is to hold the enemy in the middle of the map long enough for missiles to soften them and reinforcements to get into place. Addressing this last point, as reinforcements are brought in, move Tanks to the flank of the Alaska position to set up ZOC zines so as to slow down the landing force and dissuade easy advancement.

Tactics for the ESA are more straight forward. First, *spread out,* one unit to a hex, preventing a lucky missile shot or two from wiping you out. Then, engage and destroy any units blocking your advance. The hovercraft types are great for this king of fighting. Oh, sure, Armored Sleds work well, but exchanges are disastrous! As you clear a path, move forward immediately with your transports towards Alaska. Heading for the flanks (the farthest points from the Deadhorse reinforcement hex) is best. Send the heavy units, Missile and Armored Sled types up the middle and hope for some early shots on the oil field. If you can get a decent shot at Deadhorse with a missile, by all means take it! Missiles should be unloaded fairly quickly since the Missile Sled(s) are high priority targets and not long for this world. By all means, protect the Command and Missile Sleds from enemy units!

The main assault phase is the final, deciding segment of the game. During this time, the fighting centers around the oil fields and the ESA is landing or has landed, its Infantry and Tanks.

The US should use its superiority in land units to engage and defeat the ESA Tanks and Infantry as soon as possible keeping them from congregating into strong forces. It is fairly

easy to maintain a line of ZOCs around the oil hexes to prevent enemy Tanks and Hovercraft from slipping in and getting a free shot at the oil wells. Try to keep the oil wells insulated by having at least one hex between ESA units and the wells. Don't defend *on* the oil hexes; you're just making it easier for him! Holding one or two missiles in reserve is a good way to prevent the enemy from forming large powerful stacks.

This final phase is the roughest for the ESA. Conversions might make it impossible for Sleds to get near the wells, or for Sled Transports to unload their passengers. Loss of the Command Sled is strongly felt now when there are plenty of high combat factor US defending units around.

Get Tanks and Infantry on solid land (tundra or mud) as soon as possible; the endgame is often an Infantry and Tank slugfest. Get your boys there quickly! Hovercraft can be used against weak spots in the US line and to exploit gaps. Avoid stacking unless it is really neccessary for as long as the enemy has missiles.

Take whatever you can get against the oil wells. The CRT is bloody and once engaged, your units go fast and may not get a second chance. This could mean attacking at poor odds, just to apply maximum factors to a hex. Remember: it is the destruction of oil wells, and not enemy units, which determines victory.

If you can, move your units onto undestroyed oil well hexes. This forces the US to do the converting for you while you attack adjacent well hexes or even sit, quietly!

This final phase is often a free for all. If most of the ESA land units have unloaded and the Command Sled is intact, invader chances are not bad; much will depend on whether the bloody CRT grants him clean kills or plagues him with disastrous exchanges. Both players should always keep the oil wells uppermost in their mind; the attacker bent on destroying them, the defender on preserving them.

One final tactic should be mentioned. Because of the effect converted hexes have on movement for many units, it is often wise for the US player to purposely convert many of the hexes around the oil well and Alaskan shore to block movement. These attacks can be carried out from the onset by units stationed in Alaska or by missiles. Purposely converting hexes like 2022, 2021, 2120, 2321 and even the island hexes, can seriously hamper the ESA during the final phase of the game.

To sum up, ICE WAR is a tactical game where unit differentiation and good tactics really mean something. Units must be chosen after evaluation of a number of criteria, and with an eye to how they will mesh with the rest of the force. Tactics depend to a great extent on the forces chosen, with players having considerable power to manipulate the situation. ICE WAR is a fine tactical game, challenging and strengthening a player's gamesmanship.

SUMMARY OF ICE WAR UNITS

USA UNITS

INFANTRY:
STRENGTHS: *combat factor, cost* **WEAKNESS:** *speed*

TANKS:
STRENGTHS: *combat factor, speed* **WEAKNESS:** *mobility*

OUTPOSTS:
STRENGTHS: *detection radius* **WEAKNESSES:** *combat and movement factors*

HOVERCRAFT:
STRENGTHS: *combat factor, mobility* **WEAKNESS:** *none*

RECON SLEDS:
STRENGTHS: *speed* **WEAKNESS:** *combat value*

VERTOLs:
STRENGTHS: *speed and mobility* **WEAKNESS:** *combat factor*

RECON SATELLITES:
STRENGTHS: *detection zone, range* **WEAKNESS:** *combat factor*

ORBITAL WEAPONS PLATFORMS:
STRENGTH: *missile fire, range* **WEAKNESS:** *cost, combat factor*

MISSILE:
STRENGTHS: *range, attack capability* **WEAKNESS:** *none*

ESA UNITS

COMMAND SLED:
STRENGTH: *special abilities* **WEAKNESS:** *combat factor*

MISSILE SLED:
STRENGTH: *missile fire* **WEAKNESS:** *cost*

MISSILES:
STRENGTHS: *range, attack capability* **WEAKNESS:** *none*

SLED TRANSPORT:
STRENGTHS: *combat factor* **WEAKNESS:** *mobility*

ARMORED SLED:
STRENGTH: *attack factor* **WEAKNESS:** *mobility*

HOVERCRAFT TRANSPORT:
STRENGTH: *mobility* **WEAKNESS:** *combat factor*

ARMORED HOVERCRAFT:
STRENGTHS: *combat factor, mobility* **WEAKNESS:** *none*

LIGHT HOVERCRAFT:
STRENGTHS: *speed, mobility* **WEAKNESS:** *none*

TANKS:
STRENGTHS: *speed, combat factor, point cost* **WEAKNESS:** *mobility*

INFANTRY:
STRENGTHS: *combat factor, cost* **WEAKNESS:** *speed*

BEAUTY and the BEAST

BLACK HOLE in the Balance

by

Scot F. Bayless

One of my all time favorite buzzwords is at least as old as Avalon Hill. I doubt anyone can say where the term "simulation game" originated, though I suspect it probably grew from early gamefreaks' need to justify their hobby at a time when warriors were unfashionable. Wargamers were killers. However, simulations were the province of scholars.

As pretentious as "simulation game" may sound, its worth goes far beyond the euphamism. In fact, it neatly describes the designer's job in five syllables.

"Game" can cover a lot of ground—from poker to football. However, in the purest sense of the word, a "game" is an arbitrary set of rules by which two or more people compete. The key word is "arbitrary". A game need have no link to the real world. Instead, it can stand alone on the interaction between players and rules. In short, if it's fun, it's good.

A "simulation" can be much more esoteric. A physics student may want to get an idea of what happens when three massive bodies get together. Maybe he'd like to see what a large asteroid would do to the Earth-Moon system. He can't simply sit down and run through a set of equations. That's a problem his first year Calculus course hasn't equipped him to handle. So, what does he do? He constructs a mathematical model--a simulation-- to approximate the real thing. Then he stuffs it into the nearest computer, cranks it up and lets it fly.

A simulation, then, is a system which models another system. It's a tool for discovering how something behaves under variable conditions. For the most part, the complexity of simulations is directly proportional to the complexity of the systems they represent and the accuracies desired.

So we now have the designer's dilemna. On one end of the scale is the elegance and simplicity of Chess and Othello. The other is occupied by those magnificent monsters like AIR WAR (SPI) and CHIVALRY & SORCERY (GDW). The designer has to balance the simulation against the game, temper the Beast with Beauty, while staying faithful to his original concept. BLACK HOLE, Robert Taylor's latest effort, is a perfect case in point.

For those who haven't seen the game yet, BLACK HOLE is based on an argument over ownership rights between rival asteroid mining cartels. The object of the disagreement is a toroidal (donut shaped) hunk of rock which happens to be sprinkled with alien ruins. The black hole? It's hanging in the middle of the donut.

So far, so good. We have an interesting rationale and the screwiest piece of terrain since the invention of the hex-mapsheet, but there are problems. Science fiction game design, like sci-fi writing, has certain inherent restrictions. Unless you can stay within the framework of "accepted" scientific fact, you're headed toward the chaos of fantasy. BLACK HOLE contains certain inaccuracies which may weaken the "science" of its science fiction. We'll get to those in a bit. First, I need to explain something.

Like most gamers, I have an uncontrollable urge to question everything in a new game. I'm always asking "Why?" wondering "Would it really work that way?" Several times this has led me to completely rewrite a set of rules to fit my own standards. It was those rewrites which showed me Beauty & the Beast in action. Now, I ask my questions in terms of the balance, the intent of the game.

There are two basic types of unit in the game: laser and missile. The missiles are controllable for a short time after launch. They then fall into an uncontrolled orbit and coast until someone gets in the way-- or until they smack into a mountain.

First, I wondered why these missiles were allowed to attack friendly and enemy units alike. Hell, for fifty bucks I can build you a coding transmitter and a decoding receiver which would prevent a missile from detonating with friendlies in the area.

Then I got myself worked up over the rather short control range of the missiles. The Army is presently experimenting with a sort of smart-cluster-bomb. A Lance missile would carry several self-guided, anti-armor rockets 20+ miles to the target area and release them. Each rocket would then go chasing after its own enemy vehicle. The missiles in BLACK HOLE behave more like TOWs (Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire-guided missiles) and certainly don't represent the state of the art.

The very act of allowing missiles to orbit the toroid gave me troubles. Lay a donut on a table, find yourself a good sized kitchen knife and chop the donut in two. Now pick up half of your victim and look directly at the two cut surfaces. What you see is two circles. See example one.

Now imagine each of these circles as a point gravity source. If you put a projectile in orbit around one of these points, the other will tend to perturb that orbit and you get something like example two.

If you introduce a *third* gravity source (the black hole) midway between the two, you compound the problem and get things like example three. No sane corporate trooper would try launching a missile in that kind of situation.

Both the jacket blurb and the rules mention units disappearing in a burst of X-rays when they get too close to the black hole during a jump (a jump is a manuever used to zip across the inside of the donut). My gripe here was that the X-ray region around a black hole is the result of a very specific set of circumstances. I'm not at all certain that tossing any old chunk of matter into a black hole will give you an X-ray emission.

Present theory predicts that a black hole, when in the vicinity of a live star, may be identified as a strong X-ray source (such as Cygnus X-1). This is because a star is constantly throwing off billions of tons of superheated gas. A high proportion of this solar wind will be composed of ions and charged elementary particles. These charged particles are moving at a pretty good clip, but immense numbers of them will spiral into the black hole's maw. It's this constant flux of charged particles moving in ever-tightening orbits around the hole which creates the X-rays we detect.

I think it much more likely that anyone watching some poor beggar crash into the black hole would simply see him vanish.

At this point, there are probably dozens of loyal Metagamers bridling over my nit-picking pot shots, so before they organize a lynching committee, let's take another look at those "discrepancies". This time, however, we'll examine how they actually *contribute* to the game.

THE MISSILES

This one's easy. Taylor has created a very carefully balanced combat system. The laser units are very restricted on the outside of the toroid. Due to the small size of the donut, objects disappear over the horizon at a short distance. Missiles, however, don't have line of sight problems. They can be used against targets beyond the horizon and Taylor has wisely limited their maximum controlled range to the same distance as "short" range for lasers.

The "mindless missiles" rule, which allows them to attack anyone who gets in the way, can be justified as easily. It adds a little risk and takes some of the sting out of the missile units.

ORBITS

Without those missiles orbiting the way they do, BLACK HOLE could easily become another shoot-'em-up. Who cares if the rule isn't an exact simulation? It's close enough. Besides, you haven't lived until one of those wandering bombs comes zipping back to blast you 3 turns after *you* launched it.

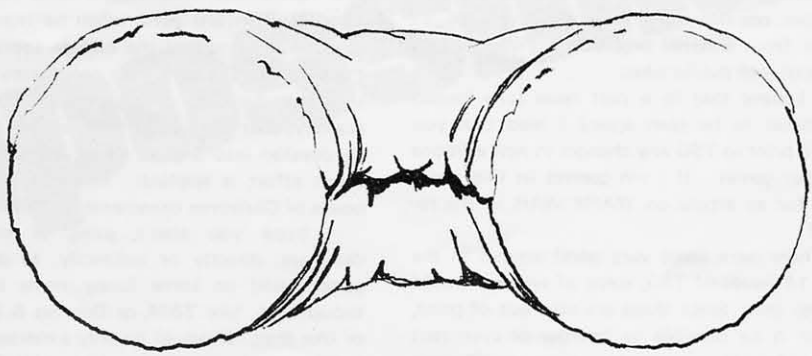
X-RAYS

This is a simple case of "science be damned". The X-ray rule happens to be a neat way of cleaning up a whole flock of counters at once. I wouldn't part with it for all the ABMs in Russia.

So where does all this leave us? We're right back where we started, with the concept of balance. Go berserk on accuracy and all you've got is a stack of charts and a glossary which could make a basket case out of Merriam Webster. Take a game too far in the other direction, and you're competing with Monopoly.

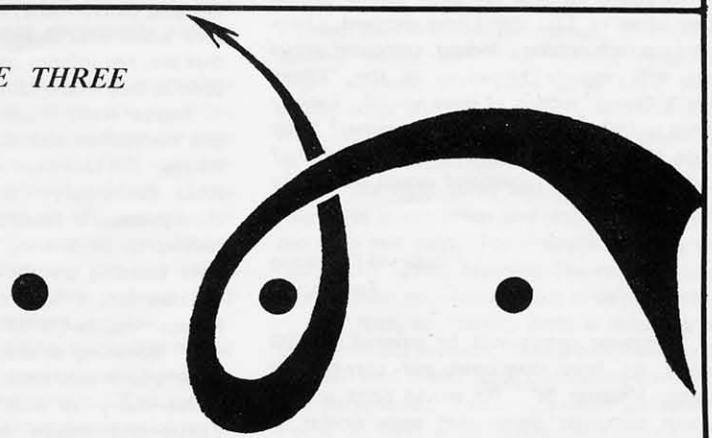
Viewed in those terms, taking into account the tension between simulation and game, BLACK HOLE's minor flaws become insignificant. Each one is there for the sake of the game's internal structure. Correct them and you're on your way to the first $10 Micro-Game. Leave them as they are and you have a gem for $2.95.

EXAMPLE ONE



EXAMPLE TWO

EXAMPLE THREE



Letters to the Editor

I liked the Arneson interview, it gave an interesting look at both the man and a very creative company that has often seemed to suffer from internal problems that sometimes leak out into public view.

I believe that in a past issue (one loaned out never to be seen again) I read that you would print in TSG any changes in new editions of your games. If I am correct in this, can I look for an article on WARP WAR in the future?

There were some very good articles in the first 14 issues of TSG, some of which I would like to get. Since these are now out of print, would it be possible to borrow or even rent some of these in order to get the use of these selected articles? The most difficult lesson to learn is that no matter what you tell a friend who borrows a magazine about it's value to you as part of a collection, etc., most people seem to regard any non hard cover publication as disposable.

I now await your publication of the ultimate game, a combination of WarpWar, Stellar Conquest, StarForce (some complications there), with an alternate combat system to allow the use of miniatures. In addition, OGRE & StarShip Troopers for small scale combat, and an as yet undetermined set for larger ground operations. All of course tied in to the Stellar Conquest production system. Pull in the material from the articles mentioned above and you have most of it ready (well . . .).

Nevin J. Templin
Willingboro, NJ

I subscribed to TSG because I was under the impression that it devoted at least a fraction of its article space to computer games. In the two issues of TSG that I have received, I have seen no such articles. Indeed, computer games are only vaguely hinted at in the "Where We're Going" section of issue no. 20. Exactly what is TSG's stand on computer games? What type of games do you plan on covering, if any? Answers to these questions would be hardily appreciated.

David Fogelsong
Tucson, AZ

Computer games will be covered in TSG when we have developed our play-by-mail game, Metastar 80. We would print articles about computer games that were similar to conflict simulations if we had them submitted. We print the best of what is submitted, which hasn't included computer game articles to date.

Howard Thompson

TARTARS AND MARTYRS is really dumb. The whole idea fails for the same reason the Dean at Stanford gave, when he rejected the suggestion of calling the college footbal team "the Robber Barons": it's only funny the first time you hear it. I know the rules are only sketchy, but the whole idea seems to trivial to develop into a good game, no matter how much effort is applied: like hanging several boxes of Christmas ornaments on a dandelion.

I hope you aren't going to encourage designers, directly or indirectly, to develop a game based on some funny name they just thought up, like T&M, or Bunnies & Burrows, or like that. It would be only a matter of time before we'd get things like LUNGERS & SPONGERS: the finest swordsmen of 17th-century France against the wealthy but shiftless playboys of the Roaring '20s. As the musketeers lunge and parry, the unarmed socialites try to mooch an invite down to the French estates for the weekend. Ungh.

There's also a more important matter I think you'll be interested in. Here in the Reno area there's a chain of specialty stores carrying a full line of wargames. Every once in a while I check there to see the new MicroGames and whatnot. They hadn't gotten any new ones in for a while, and when I asked why, the manager told me that Micro sales had fallen off drastically, after a promising start. This frightened me, since you are pouring so much of your time and resources into Micros. Don't you think they might turn out to be just a very big fad that's just now beginning to die out? Also, you might have simply overloaded your audience with too many of the things. I myself haven't bought any since OLYMPICA, because I already have too many and no opportunity to play them anyway. And OGRE still seems to be the best of them. Maybe by bringing out so many, so quickly, you have not only killed your audience but produced games that are, not inferior by any means, but not as good as they might have been.

Maybe Reno is just backwards, and everyone everywhere else in the whole world loves Micros. I'm sure from where you sit everything looks hunky-dory. But remember all those clunky Galactic Empire tales where the center seemed to be thriving while the outer worlds were seceding by the dozens? Like I say, I'm worried; I have no financial interest in Metagaming, but I do have a strong personal one. Speaking as one of the outer worlds, I think you should dedicate more time to larger games---hurry up with TFT and HYMENOPTERA---and maybe Metastar 80, too; but concentrate considerably less on Micros. You might want to consider a drastic move, such as a year-long hiatus in new Micro production, to see whether they continue to sell as well, and whether other companies' efforts will dilute the market.

I hate your Feedback Form. Your "evaluation" questions don't nearly cover the possible specturm of responses. I do like TSG the way it is and don't like the proposed new format at all---but on the other hand I would still continue to buy it if you did change over. But on the third hand, I still want you to go back to your original format, way back when. I liked the smaller size, the non-slick paper, and especially the cheaper price and the less-formal atmosphere. But reversion to the previous format wasn't even mentioned on the Feedback sheet. You can't go home again? Another thing I hate: the name "Micro-Tures." It sounds like a medical term or something.

Allen Varney
Reno, NV

Oh frabjous day! Ronald Pehr's letter in TSG no. 21 was just about what I was hoping for with my letter in TSG no. 19. As I said there, the Oriental martial arts should be worked out for use in TFT, worked out carefully and properly, and this will require much exchange of ideas. I've come up with a number of new ideas on the subject since then, and re-worked some of my old ones. Though I'm tempted to list them all here, this is not really a forum for detailed discussions, so I will limit myself to a few.

A beginning Samurai, or Ninja, would, of course, carry only 32 attribute points. But, as a beginning Western swordsman is a long way from being a hero, so is a novice Samurai a long way from being a master. A novice would need to rack up a few E.P. before he starts getting good. This is even more true of the Oriental techniques than it is of Western swordplay. With the martial arts, you have disciplines that require much more training (in TFT terms, E.P. cashed in on DX and IQ) than swinging a broadsword.

I suggested that the Oriental weapons themselves carry DX penalties (or, possibly different damage capabilities when used by trained and untrained fighters) because they are, in many cases, harder to use effectively. A ST 12 Samurai would probably be more formidable with a broadsword than an equivalent Western swordsman with a Katana. A Crusader would not know how to get 2 + 2 dice damage from Junchaker. But a Ninja of ST9 could be devastating with them. Obviously, when you start talking about the martial arts, a direct proportion between strength and damage potential flies rather rapidly out the window.

I invite anyone interested in this subject to communicate directly with me. My address is 821 Leland, apt. 1-N, St. Louis, MO 63130. I extend a special invitation to David James Ritchie and Ronald Pehr, and, regardless of where the fault may lie, I sympathize with Mr. Pehr on the misspelling of his name.

Ben V. Kloepper
St. Louis, MO

SUBMISSION: impossible

by

GLENN L. WILLIAMS

Editors of wargaming magazines are requesting articles from their readers. Some promise "instant fame" and maybe, payment! Perhaps you have an idea. What next? I read many articles and editorials before finding the courage to actually type and mail a manuscript. What follows is my experience in the art of composing and submitting a manuscript. I hope it helps you.

There are six steps in the process of submitting a manuscript: developing the idea; research; first draft; revision; and preparing the final package.

The first step is development. Usually my idea is general and vague at first. It has to be narrowed, refined. I sketch the idea in a special notebook, give it a temporary title, and then carry the notebook around for a couple of weeks. If you do this, occasionally take out the notebook and explore the idea, its ramifications and limits. Each time, you define your subject a little better and thus, know a little more about how you will approach it. Ask yourself questions about it: is it science fiction, fantasy or historical?; what do you know about the subject?; what don't you know?

One major consideration is the market: for what magazine are you writing?; does the idea fit with others you have seen published in that magazine? It does not have to be the same old stuff, but the style and tone should match the magazine's.

Outline the idea. List major and minor points plus examples that help illustrate them. Arrange the parts in a specific order, such as chronological, geographic or syllogistic. By doing so, you can spot the strong points and weak areas where more work is needed. If necessary, put it aside for a few days. Get a fresh perspective on points that blocked you.

The second step is research. Defining the idea gives the direction your research should take. This step does not necessarily mean spending long hours in a university library. If the idea concerns a specific game, get out your notebook and play the game a few times with your idea in mind, making notes as you go. Explain it to friends and listen to their comments. Do not feel you cannot write on a subject simply because you are not a technical expert in the field. Do you have to be an astrophysicist to comment on the movement rules of BLACK HOLE? Do you have to be an Alaska resident to analyze terrain effects in ICE WAR? The answer is no. You need an interest and willingness to find the answers. There are many magazines specializing in scientific subjects for laymen to help you. SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, and AVIATION WEEK and SPACE TECHNOLOGY are designed for people who have an interest but not neccessarily the degrees.

One useful technique is to write each piece of information and its source on an index card. They are easy to carry and can be organized and reorganized as you refine your presentation. One caution about research: if you use someone else's ideas or information, give them credit. Footnotes, parentheses, bibliography, or inserted comments can give credit where it is due. Both courtesy and copyright laws require at least that much.

The third step is writing an outline of the article itself. You previously outlined the subject as an aid to refining it. This second outline is to organize your presentation so it is easily followed and understood. The outline should have the three classic divisions: introduction, body and conclusion. The body outline should present your arguments in logical order. It can be as detailed or as sketchy as you want, because it is only a tool to get you to the next step:

First draft. Some writers call this the "zero draft". They do not even consider it a draft, only an attempt to get their ideas onto paper for examination. I have found this draft exposes more weaknesses in the idea than any other stage of the process. Don't let yourself get bogged down at this stage. If you run into a problem, keep writing: *you are going to butcher this draft anyway.*

Generally, I have found this draft is really awful. This is a critical stage. You might think the article is so terrible no one will want to read it. The wastepaper basket yawns. You start to pitch your manuscript. Stop! Toss it and no one will ever see your name in print. Nine times out of ten, someone else will write the article, and you'll kick yourself. If your idea is good enough to carry your interest this far, it deserves more attention.

It is probably best to start using a typewriter at this stage. It is easier to work from a typed, double-spaced manuscript. The double spacing leaves room for writing revisions. Begin working with some other basic tools at this stage also: a dictionary for unfamiliar or unusual words *and* their spelling; a thesaurus to keep your vocabulary somewhat varied and give it the right tone; and a style manual to help with punctuation and grammar. The last can be a real help. For example, commas are hairy little beasts, breeding like rabbits. Like rabbits, their population needs to be controlled.

The first, or "zero", draft is followed by the first major revision. Take a pencil and write all over zero draft. Line out useless sentences and paragraphs. Examine your organization. Focus on weak areas, giving them more attention. If the weakness is in research, go back and find new material. If it is in presentation, reorganize. If it is in conception, rethink your idea.

Revision is a three phase process of the type computer people like to call a "feedback loop": revise, retype, edit. If necessary, begin again with revision. Analyze what you have written. Decide if it could be better. Make it better, then look at it again. Begin working

on style and polish, lighten the article with humor, trim the repetitious.

Editing, the process of analyzing a finished draft, is a difficult process of getting more out of less. Very few people can examine their own work impartially. Give your manuscript to someone whose language skills are trustworthy. Remember, your friend is trying to help. He has to read your manuscript, not your mind. If something is unclear to the editor or any other reader, it is worth *your* attention. Revise until you are comfortable with the compromise between the editor's suggestions and your own opinion. If you do not know someone who will do this thankless task, set the manuscript aside for a few days. Come back to it fresh, with pencil in hand.

When this process is finished, you are ready for the final draft. Like anything sold in a store, a final draft is a product. You will not be on hand to sell it, so "neatness counts". Clean your typewriter and change the ribbon if necessary. The manuscript should be typed, double-spaced with generous margins. Use your style manual. The paper should not be eraseable bond, because the editor will have to write on it. The final draft should be relatively error-free, but minor corrections can be made neatly with a black, ball-point pen. Any page with major errors should be retyped. Put your name and address on the first page and your name on each following page.

Another part of your final package is the cover letter. Briefly tell the editor who you are, what you have written, and why you think it is appropriate for his magazine. If you have some special qualification such as military experience, academic background, or a lifelong interest in the subject, say so. Sign the letter, and if your signature is a scrawl like mine, type your name under it.

Every package ready for submission has four parts: cover letter; final draft; a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) for the editor to return your manuscript or respond to it; and the mailing envelope. Be very careful that both envelopes have enough postage. Use envelopes big enough so the manuscript can be mailed flat.

When you get to the Post Office, ask about the fourth class rate for manuscripts. It is very inexpensive, but requires the packet be labeled "Special Fourth Class Rate-Manuscript". There is also a provision for including a cover letter at the first class rate. The Post Office will advise against fourth class; they will tell you, "I wouldn't mail my manuscript fourth class. God knows when it will get there!" It gets there about the same time as first class. With small, short articles, fourth class might not be worthwhile, but with longer pieces it is definitely worth the hassle.

Keep records on your submissions. Make a carbon or photocopy of the final draft. Know what manuscript went where, when and how much it cost. Also keep track of what the responses are, how long they took to respond and the result. Magazines are bureaucracies, so nothing happens over-night. Even a month wait might not be long enough. You'll learn which editors are prompt and which are not. The normal practice is payment upon publication. Some magazines do not pay. Know before you mail.

When you get your first acceptance, don't drop out of school or quit your job. The normal rate is about one cent per word, and if you cost it out, you'll find you are working for slave wages. Cash the check, buy the new game you could not afford last month, and let your friends know they have a published writer among their acquaintances.

If you were not accepted, rejection has its uses. Professional writers joke about papering their bathroom walls with rejection slips. Most editors are not evil. Their comments on a rejected manuscript should be taken seriously. If the editor said the piece was not acceptable in its present form, why not put in the extra effort and try again? If he says it is not right for his magazine, perhaps you have misjudged your market. Try another magazine. Rejection has one psychological advantage: according to IRS, once you have a rejection slip, you're a writer. If the editor doesn't like your work, at least you have the U.S. Government on your side!

I consider myself a semi-professional writer, and that describes not a degree of success, but an attitude. Writing is a craft requiring effort and a knowledge of the tools of the trade. From this point on, you are also a semi-professional. You are not necessarily writing for the money, but for the gratification of seeing your name in print and sharing your ideas with the wargaming hobby. You'll have that "instant fame" the editor promised. Good luck.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

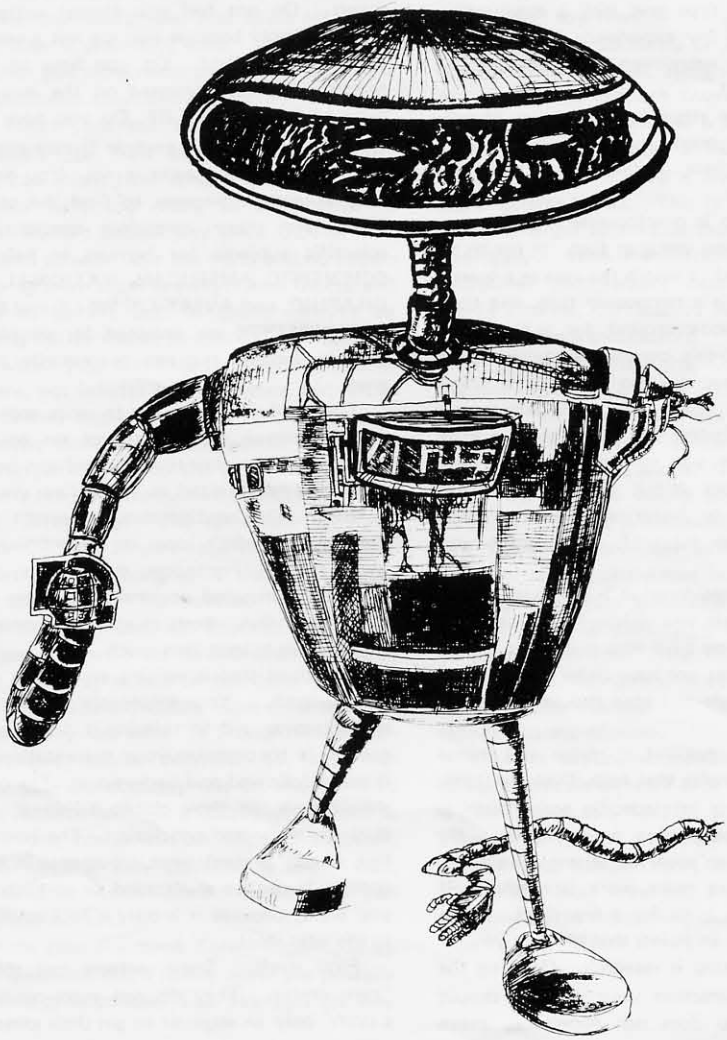
There are many books on the subject of writing. The ones below are those I have found useful. If you care to look, most should be available in any public library, book store, or through the major book clubs.

1. Applebaum, Judith and Evans, Nancy, **How to Get Happily Published**, Harper and Row, New York, 1978.

2. Barzun, Jacques, **Simple and Direct**, Harper and Row, New York, 1975.

3. Parker, William Riley, **The MLA Style Sheet**, Modern Language Association, New York, 1967. The college student's bogey monster, and the prima donna of style manuals. It really doesn't deserve its terrible reputation.

4. Strunk, Wm. and White E.B., **The Elements of Style**, Third Edition (1979), MacMillan, 1959. This is still the very best book one can obtain on grammar, style, and writing.



Party Brawl

by

PAUL WAGNER

PARTY BRAWL is a solitaire game which does *not* simulate action at a large college campus, dormitory party. Players create figures and send them into social situations with nothing but their bare hands, wits, and maybe a few cold brews to protect them. Successful partyers collect sex and macho points, and score; losers are beaten unconscious, pass out, throw up, and are embarrassed beyond the point of no return, or all of the above. *(Note: PARTY BRAWL is not a stand-alone game; WIZARD rules are required.)*

Components

One set of WIZARD rules

Pencils, scratch paper, and four 6-sided die

Creating a figure

Create a figure as in WIZARD so that ST + DX + IQ = 32 with a minimum of 8 points in each category.

Strength governs:

1) How many hits a figure takes before he becomes unconscious.
2) How powerful a figure's fists are as weapons.
3) What sort of protection your strength (as body armor) gives you defensively.
4) How many beers a figure may consume before having to worry about passing out and/or throwing up.

Dexterity governs:

1) How well a figure can dance.
2) How likely a figure is to hit an opponent and how quickly he may strike in a fight.

Dexterity is adjusted for several factors such as wounds and beer consumed. See later tables for such DX adjustments.)

IQ governs:

1) How likely a figure will win an argument.
2) How easily he can talk his way out of the ensuing fight.

Sequence of events in PARTY BRAWL

One game of PARTY BRAWL consists of 20 turns. Turn count must be kept by the

gamer. At the beginning of *each* turn, two 6-sided dice are thrown, and the Fate table is consulted. This roll may (or may not) decide the figure's subsequent actions. See Fate table below:

Roll	Roll
2-Fight	8-Nothing
3-Fight	9-Nothing
4-Nothing	10-Dance
5-Nothing	11-Dance
6-Nothing	12-Dance
7-Argue	

Dance

When the Fate table says "dance," you have been asked to dance. Your options are as follows:

A) To refuse, and immediately lost 5 sex points.

B) To accept, in which case you must roll your DX or less, four times successively on three die. Results are tabulated as follows:

4 out of 4 rolls = 20 sex points
3 out of 4 rolls = 10 sex points
2 out of 4 rolls = 0 sex points
1 out of 4 rolls = -10 sex points
1 out of 4 rolls = -15 sex points

Each of these options (either A or B) takes place in one single turn. If you gain any sex points at all, the Fate table is modified in the following manner: For every time you successfully dance (gain sex points), the Fights option on the Fate table extends to one more number (i.e., after you successfully dance one time, a Fate roll of 2, 3, *or* 4 reads Fight. After three successful dances, a roll of 2-6 reads Fight. Any further dancing increases the fight option on to rolls of 8 and 9; 7 always remains Argue, and 10-12 always stays Dance.)

Argue

When the Fate table says "argue", someone is attempting to begin an argument with you. Your options are:

A) To apologize, and immediately lose 10 macho points.

B) To argue, in which case you must roll your IQ or less, four times successively on three die. Results are tabulated as follows:

4 out of 4 rolls = 15 macho points
3 out of 4 rolls = 10 macho points
2 out of 4 rolls = 0 macho points
1 out of 4 rolls = -15 macho points
0 out of 4 rolls = -20 macho points

If you lose an argument, you may ask your opponent to fight. On a roll of 1-3, he apologized, regaining 10 macho points for you. On a roll of 4-6, he agrees. (In such an event, go to rules concerning *Fight* option.) If you win an argument, your opponent will automatically choose to fight you. You may then decline (and lose 10 macho points immediately), you may accept (see *Fight* rules), *or* you may try to talk you way out of it. To do this, you must roll your IQ or less, one more time--if you are successful, no fight develops; if not, a fight immediately develops. If, in any case, a fight develops, it is considered as taking place in the turn following the argument turn. The Fate dice are, in this case, not rolled for the next turn. (You may chug a beer at the end of the argument and before the fight if you so choose. See, also, *Beer drinking.)*

Fight

If the Fate dice indicate fighting, you may either:

A) Decline, losing 10 macho points immediately,

B) Fight

You may "create" your opponent on the Fighter table below *before* you decide whether or not you will fight or decline. Roll two 6-sided dice and consult the table below for your opponent:

	ST	DX	IQ	
2	14	10	8	(Tom)
3	13	11	8	(Dick)
4	12	11	9	(Harry)
5	11	12	9	(John)
6	10	12	10	(John)
7	8	12	12	(John)
8	9	11	12	(John)
9	10	11	11	(John)
10	11	11	10	(John)
11	14	10	8	(Joe)
12	15	9	8	(Francis)

Now, you may fight. Fists, as weapons, are governed by strength. The amount of damage your body absorbs each turn is governed by your strength acting as body armor. The amount of damage you may take before going

unconscious is governed by your strength or adjusted strength (see Beer drinking). See the table below:

ST	Fist-hit dice-damage	Defensive (body) armor
8-9	1-2 die	-1 pt. armor
10-11	1-1 die	0 pt. armor
12	1 die	+1 pt. armor
13-14	1+1 die	+2 pts. armor
15-16	1+2 die	+2 pts. armor

Fight following standard MELEE/WIZARD rules, including DX adjusts for 5 points damage and falling down from 8 points damage. (The Shift and Defend option may be used even though neither person has a ready weapon.) Continue until one character reaches 1 or less ST points, at which time the figure goes unconscious and the fight is over (as is the turn). If you have lost, -15 macho points and you must now try to regain consciousness. (see Regaining consciousness). If you have won, collect 30 macho points. All fighting hits are cumulative, however, so watch yourself.

At ST 3 or less, DX is adjusted to -3. This adjustment may be overcome by drinking beer, which may or may not affect your DX less harshly (depending on how many beers you have already consumed). For further instruction, see Beer drinking. A complete fight takes one full turn.

Nothing

When Fate gives you nothing, nothing happens. You may then:

A) Do nothing.

B) Try to dance (fulfilling Dance requirements).

C) Fight (rolling up your opponent from the Fighter table *after* you have decided on this option.) Your opponent will always fight.

D) Start an argument. Roll up your opponent from the Fighter table. *He* must then fulfill *Argue* requirements. If he loses macho points, he will always attempt to fight. If this happens, start the next turn according to the *Fight* rules. If you lose this argument, follow rules under *Argue.*

E) Do any one of the above and/or drink one beer.

Beer Drinking

Each beer consumed gives the player 10 macho points. When the exact number of beers consumed equals or exceeds the figure's ST points, roll 3 die against *normal* strength (not injured or adjusted ST). On a roll of ST or less, continue with your actions. On a roll 1 or 2 points greater than ST, you have passed out. (See Regaining consciousness.) On rolling 3 or more greater than strength, or a 16, 17, or 18, you have thrown up and passed out, which automatically and immediately disqualifies you from scoring and ends the game.

You may *always* choose to drink a beer at the end of *each* turn as long as you are still conscious. In other words, after successfully (or unsuccessfully) dancing, fighting, or arguing, you may choose to chug a brew before the Fate dice are cast again.

Beer drinking affects your DX, IQ, and defensive strength. See the table below:

Beers drunk	Adj. DX	Adj. IQ	Adj. ST
1-2	0	0	0
3-4	-1	0	+1
5-6	-2	-1	+2
7-8	-3	-2	+3
9-10	-4	-3	+4
11-12	-6	-4	+5
13-14	-8	-6	+6
15-16	-10	-8	+7

Thus, beer will hinder you in dancing and arguing, but both hinders and helps you in fighting. Beer adds hits onto your strength defensively, but does not increase your body's armor, nor does it change the damage your fists do. (Realistically, beer doesn't make you hit harder, nor does it add to your body protection, but it *numbs* you to the damage you take.)

Regaining consciousness

After losing consciousness, one attempt each turn may be made to regain it. To do this, ST must be rolled on 3 die or less. If successful, ST returns to 1/3 normal strength. However, if you had drunk beer equal to your normal strength and were then beaten unconscious, or if this is not the first time you have gone unconscious, *then* ST must be rolled on 4 dice.

Experience points

Successfully scoring gains the player 1 experience point which may be put in any category (ST, DX, IQ) one chooses.

Victory conditions

If (sex points) + 2/3 (macho points) = 81, then you've scored! Congratulations. If your total of points is in the negative figures, don't feel bad--everyone has bad nights.

Author's Notes

This game is meant to satirize Metagaming's MicroGames, especially MELEE, WIZARD, and DEATH TEST. It is based in almost no part whatsoever on fact. The whole thing is rather sexist--but, what the hell--if you can't regard this game as the amusing recreation it is meant to be, ignore it entirely.

My thanks to assistant designer Dan Reno and playtester Dave Wagner.

1978 Feedback Results

Game Type Ratings	1978	1977
Fantasy Role Playing	7.37	6.45
Fantasy Board Games	6.75	6.24
Planetary Tactical Combat	6.84	7.02
Future Society Level	6.55	6.94
Space Tactical Level	6.92	7.60
Space Role Playing	6.18	6.51
Unclassified	5.44	-----
Magazine Ratings		
Strategy & Tactics	7.10	7.10
Moves	6.28	6.97
The General	5.44	6.18
The Dragon	6.45	6.09
Wargamer's Digest	4.87	5.87
Fire & Movement	6.98	7.29
White Dwarf	6.44	6.26
The Space Gamer	7.64	7.86
Company Ratings		
Avalon Hill	5.96	6.55
Battleline	5.92	6.66
Chaosium	6.95	6.87
Eon Products	5.97	5.39
Excalibur	5.03	4.88
Fantasy Games Unlimited	6.42	-----
Flying Buffalo, Inc.	6.47	6.37
Game Designer's Workshop	7.85	6.82
Gametime Games	5.52	-----
Metagaming	7.72	8.21
Simulation Publications, Inc.	7.18	7.24
Tactical Studies Rules	6.40	6.40
Zocchi & Associates	5.52	5.89
Dimension Six	5.35	-----
Conflict Games	6.67	-----
Planetary Tactical Level		
Star Soldier	6.33	6.70
Starship Trooper	6.02	7.04
Atlantis 12,500	4.74	-----
Ogre	7.63	7.49
Chitin:I	5.97	6.68
Rivets	5.98	6.88
Olympica	6.53	-----
GEV	7.81	-----
Ice War	7.25	-----
Sticks & Stones	6.90	-----
Invasion America	6.69	6.68
Objective Moscow	6.22	-----
Space Tactical Level		
Alpha Omega	6.08	6.88
Star Fighter	5.05	-----
WarpWar	6.90	7.14
Battlefleet Mars	6.89	6.79
Starforce	6.38	6.81
Alien Space	5.45	4.37
Quazar	5.22	5.25
The Ythri	5.57	5.95
Direct Conflict	5.18	-----
Mayday	6.50	-----
Black Hole	6.94	-----

Future Society Level	1978	1977
Second Empire	6.40	-----
Stellar Conquest	7.34	7.75
Star Probe	5.24	5.53
Star Empires	5.31	5.53
Godsfire	6.72	7.29
Outreach	6.54	6.49
Imperium	6.93	6.72
After the Holocaust	6.64	6.69
Space Role Playing		
Starfaring	5.38	4.39
Traveller	7.08	6.91
Gamma World	6.61	-----
Flash Gordon	4.45	-----
Starship & Spacemen	5.83	-----
Metamorphosis Alpha	5.79	-----
Unclassified		
Cosmic Encounters	5.96	6.81
Strange New Worlds	5.74	-----
Super Hero '44	5.29	-----
Star Web	5.92	6.95
Fantasy Role Playing		
TFT: Wizard	7.79	7.86
Citadel	5.57	-----
TFT: Death Test	7.36	-----
Tunnels & Trolls	5.51	5.40
TFT: Melee	7.65	7.16
Dungeon!	5.93	5.58
Chivalry & Sorcery	6.75	-----
Swords & Sorcery	6.01	-----
Dungeons & Dragons (old)	6.64	6.35
Dungeons & Dragons (new)	6.85	6.79
Monster Manual	6.73	-----
Empire of the Petal Throne	6.31	6.40
D&D-Advanced Book	6.84	-----
Swords & Sorcerors	6.00	-----
Fantasy Board Games		
War of Wizards	5.79	5.56
White Bear & Red Moon	6.37	7.29
Lankhmar	4.71	4.97
Spellmaker	5.65	-----
Nomad Gods	6.61	7.00
Warlocks & Warriors	3.77	2.14
Quest	5.00	-----
Sorceror	6.26	6.06
Runequest	6.39	-----
Battle of Five Armies	5.26	-----
Elric	6.63	-----
The Ring Trilogy	7.15	7.54
Lords & Wizards	6.33	-----

1978 GAME RATINGS

Well, here they are, the 1978 ratings of science fiction and fantasy games as surveyed in issue no. 20 of THE SPACE GAMER. The ratings are grouped by game type with the comparative rating for 1977 shown where available. The ratings are on a scale of one (low) to nine (high). Roughly 11% of our readers returned forms for a bit better participation than 1977.

Looking for patterns if confusing. Last year there was a definite bias in favor of Metagaming and Metagaming products. This reflected a smaller circulation of more loyal customers. The 1978 results show Game Designer's Workshop as the highest rated company. There still seems to be a bias in favor of Metagaming but it is much less pronounced this year.

The most significant result from a marketing viewpoint is the shift in favor of Fantasy games as a favorite type of game. It would seem that THE SPACE GAMER has gained an audience of fantasy gamers despite the long delays in the release of TFT: In The Labyrinth. Many, many feed back forms had comments on wanting TFT: In The Labyrinth to come out. It is the single most desired game we have in the works. TFT: ITL is in production. Steve is directly controlling the rules typesetting which is well under way. The box disaster, see page one, will probably have an affect on TFT: ITL though we don't know the extent yet. Those boxes were from the expected supplier of TFT boxes. One respondent summed up this feeling in what he wants us to do most, "complete TFT: In The Labyrinth and any other TFT projects in the works."

The interest in fantasy and TFT leads into one of our long standing reader disputes. "Get rid of all that fantasy junk and get on with the space games," was offset by, "nobody likes tactical space games anyway, do more fantasy like THE DRAGON." Since our first issue we've had the pull between those who want only fantasy and those who hate fantasy. As a game firm we have to do games in more than one area to realize our full potential. TSG has better circulation by mixing a variety of articles than by concentrating exclusively on one genre. Hopefully, we'll someday be able to publish enough to suit everybody. Until then all we can ask is tolerance for the interests of others and Metagaming's need to try to satisfy those interests. At least we can respond to the flood of comments urging us to keep TFT: ITL under $20.00 if at all possible.

Comments on THE SPACE GAMER covered just about everything. Generally, our "slick" format is liked, though few would drop us if we went back to a "fannish" journal format. Many like the visual appeal of our art and the mix of articles. Also, you want us out on time, to print more game variants, do more (or less) humor, drop (or get better) fiction, remain a non-house "organ", and not pat ourselves on the back so much. One gamer reminds us, never "start to pat yourself on the back and say 'their getting their money's worth'. I *always* want more." Another doesn't like it when, "Howard Thompson toots Metagaming's horn too much." Some wanted us to get more words in each issue, a thing already accomplished if you'll compare this issue with the last.

Most pleasing was the image THE SPACE GAMER has acheived. You feel free to give straight forward, honest criticism or praise. Many remind us not to forget the customer or build ourselves pedestals as they feel has happened to others. Every letter and comment is read even when only a few can be answered. We listen. We don't want to be part of a shoddy operation. And, pragmatically, it is simple good business to stay close to customers and try to keep them satisfied. There were requests for more order forms in TSG. Because of our application for second class postage they have to be bound inserts instead of the little flyers you used to get. There were also reminders to keep advertising consistent. We have made, or appeared to make, confusing offers in the past. New resubscription notice offer free micros to current subscribers that aren't offered to new subscribers. This issue does carry the micro subscription ad that had appeared elsewhere, an early release that was a simple misestimate as to how early we'd be ready to process the paper. Other cases can be chalked up to the long lead times required for some ads.

"Sometimes I can get my TSG or the new micros in the store before it comes in the mail." We do try to time it so that subscribers get their TSGs a little before the stores. But, the varied nature of shipping patterns and distribution can defeat this attempt. Micros will be shipped to distributors and stores as soon as they are ready. This means that on occasion, you will see micros in stores before you see a TSG ad. The only fair thing to do is ship products when ready to everyone without delay. There should be no "privileged" group of buyers, other than the subscriber discounts.

One gamer commented, "try a space role playing game based on MELEE and WARP WAR. Games like TRAVELLER lack a tactical flavor that you seem to have." Well, at the risk of discussing projects in development that have no release date, such a game system is in the works. It will be compatible with THE FANTASY TRIP system to a large degree. Emphasis will be on individual character actions and spaceships. The recent addition of two part-time playtest editors to the staff may get work done on this project sooner than anticipated.

Among things you want are the computer play-by-mail game, full die-cut counters, more solitaire material, game tie ins to media releases, and to know why we dropped MONSTERS! MONSTERS!. Well, M!M! was dropped for two reasons. It wasn't compatible with THE FANTASY TRIP system and Ken St. Andre, the designer, had become dissatisfied with the way we were handling it. We will move to full die-cut counters, actually, we thought we had until they arrived. The computer game will come as soon as our box sourcing gets straight. Game tie-ins with media releases is in the far future, if ever. There are only a few tie-ins worth buying and they are expensive to acquire and exploit. We'd rather spend our efforts on developing original material for the time being.

A few others remember THE YTHRI. "Don't reprint that dog," was the way one put it. Another thought, "it might make an o.k. micro," a thought we share. As the original designer I'll have to admit THE YTHRI is an example of a partially developed game. I don't feel it's a bad game but it should have had another go round. As of now it is out of print; don't order it. The current plan is to put it back through development as a micro and drop the name and book tie-in. It should make a good starting point for a standard planetary assault module.

"Don't forget women gamers," pleaded one respondent. She reminded us that many subscriptions go to couple in the guy's name. Their companion may also have some interest in gaming. The need for more women in gaming is a recurring thought here. My suggestion for club cheerleaders and a "Ms Gaming" contest was, however, booed down roundly as it no doubt deserved. The logical answer is to have games women like to play. That may only occur when there are games designed by women. (That's a big hint. Any design by a woman is going to get a real once over here. Frankly, she'd have more chance of getting published than a guy right now.)

Our Red Darnigame pieces roused a bit of ire here and there. One demanded we, "print an apology made by that redneck Red "John Gault" Darnigame to appear in the next issue of THE SPACE GAMER. Well, most of you know Red is fictional and that he's taken a shot at just about everything in sight, including "rednecks". We were able to contact Red briefly (through a tenuous CB link up) at a truck stop in West Nashville.

Said Red, "I really didn't mean to malign those of Polish decent. People who slide down poles are just as good as anyone else, maybe better, climbing poles is hard work." All we can add to that is nothing above humor. Honest laughter at yourself shows a healthy self esteem backed by an acceptance of mortal failings. Laughter is often our only defense.

A surprising number of readers expressed the desire that, "Metagaming never folds". Either we've said something that reflects on our survival or it is feared the mortality of game companies will reach to us. I can't emphasize strongly enough that even hurts like the box foul up can't put us under.

Remember that we don't borrow money. No creditor is going to come foreclose on us. Our profit margin is a secret and, I expect, the highest of any company in our industry. We've found the way to give good products and make a good profit.

TOP SECRET: Some of you cleverly saw through our Politics/Beliefs question and correctly answered, "stop the world and let me off, now!" You lucky people have passed our first space colony recruitment screening! Projected completion of the METAGAMING L5 gamer colony is 50 S.E. The S.E. stands for Space Era, starting from the first moon walk in 1969.

Reading the feedback forms provided us a real lift and we thank you for all the positive comments. We started work on them the day after the box bomb hit. It was just what we needed.

Howard Thompson

THREE WORDS

BY
BRIAN McCUE

At 9:50 in the morning my doorbell rang and I opened the door for Dorothy Hertz, my girlfriend. We were playing a campaign game, and one of the by-laws stipulated that each installment started at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday. Dorothy was carrying the box which contained her equipment for the game.

"Good morning."

"Likewise, I'm sure."

She set down her load and hugged me. Fraternizing with the enemy. My equipment was laid out on the table already, so I poured coffee and found a good radio station while she got set up.

The game we were playing was the 1992 version of The Fantasy Trip. It varies in several respects from the original version, which came out in installments in the late 70's, but most of them are very minor. The topic of the game remains the same; medieval and magical combat between individuals, not necessarily human. Periodically, the publishers print "MicroQuests" which are programmed adventures, leading the quest person through a labyrinth. At each stage, one gets to choose between various options, and to receive directions and information accordingly. Hazards present themselves, and there are goals to be attained. Most of the hazards are enemy guards controlled by another player.

In our campaign, Dorothy had stashed "treasure" around the Castle Dubois (pronounced "Dubious" by us), and I was trying to find it. The top floor of the castle, the only part which extended above ground, was represented by a large floor plan, marked off in hexagons. The rest of the castle, the interesting part where all the goblins and things lived, was represented by MicroQuest no. 25. In early installments of the campaign, I had taken over the top floor and established headquarters there. Now all the action occured below ground, played out on sheets of hexpaper small enough to depict a single room.

By the time I had the coffee, milk, sugar, spoons, etc., on a stand beside the table, Dorothy had her stuff spread out in front of her. She held up a 25mm crossbowman.

"What do you think of this figure?" she asked.

I pretended to misunderstand and eyed Dorothy herself, clad in blue jeans and a bright red sweater which contrasted nicely with her long, black hair.

"Not bad."

"No, dodo, I mean *this* figure.!"

I took the soldier and looked at him closely. Another of our house rules states that every character in the game must appear as a fully painted 25mm figure. Not only does this rule make the games more pleasing to the eye, but it also forces us to plan ahead and set limits on what kinds of characters we will use, since we can't afford the time or money needed to stockpile a huge variety of figures.

"Thor, are you ready?" asked Dorothy.

I supressed the urge to respond "The mighty Thor is always ready." My name is Thorsbit Duncan, and my inevitable nickname is in contrast with my 126 lb., 5' 5" physique. People make enough jokes about this incongruity that I shouldn't add any myself, and in any case, Dorothy has known me for so long that she is used to all the possible jokes on my name.

"No," I answered, "I have to select some weapons for my guys."

"I'll help you; you just tell me the strength, IQ and dexterity of each of your men and I'll. . ."

"Not a chance."

She was joking, of course. The three qualities she named are the three attributes which determine the capabilities of a character in The Fantasy Trip. They mean pretty much what they sound like they'd mean: strength measures one's capacity to carry weapons or to use magical spells, dexterity measures how adept one is at using the weapons or spells one has, and IQ measures one's ability to comprehend and remember spells, as well as one's ability to resist magical illusions. There was no way I was going to tell Dorothy the parameters of my characters, and anyway she should already have known most of them from observation in earlier installments of the game.

I got to work and picked out weapons for my men-at-arms and spells for my wizard. My wizard, Ybid, as well as my sergeant-at-arms, Sark, were products of experience. By using them in many games, I was able to raise their endowments of strength, dexterity and IQ. In Ybid's case, I had gone for IQ and dexterity at the expense of strength, but in Sark's case I had neglected IQ to build up strength and dexterity.

Ybid sat in his study in one corner of the top floor of Castle Dubois. He was looking over his book of spells, trying to figure out which he should memorzie for the upcoming expedition into the depths of the castle. He had found, as he grew older, that he could remember more spells at a time, and also that he could understand more of the book. When he was younger, he could only understand the simplest spells, such as the Aid spell which allowed one to give one's strength to another person, and of the thirteen which he could understand could never quite remember more than nine at a time. Now he could understand all of the spells in the book and commit any sixteen of them to memory at a given time. Lack of exercise had prevented him from becoming any stronger than he had been as a young man, but he was much more practiced in casting spells and nearly always cast them right on the first try. He was just about to give serious thought to these matters, and to the fact that understanding the spells and knowing them might be two different things, when Sark, his sergeant, knocked and entered.

"Sit thee down, Sergeant, and smoke a pipe with me. Have all thy men made ready?"

"Aye. They drew arms from the stores this noon. The brothers Norb, stout lads though a mite dim, chose chain mail and battleaxes. If ye get into a brawl they'll get ye out, though I wouldn't stand too near whilst they were doing it. The rest took swords and bucklers. Neither spears nor bows would I permit, down in the dungeons."

"And what of thyself?"

"Ye know my habits with arms. Broadsword, mace, steel cap."

Ybid stood up and began to pace. He had long since taught the stones in the floor to move against his pacing, to relieve him of the necessity of turning around. Now he paced endlessly towards the seated sergeant, fixing him with his grey-eyed gaze.

"Thou hast told me thy preparations: I shall tell thee mine. Thou knowest I have taken many apprentice wizards down, and few have returned. Most are captive: that was my design. Thou knowest the story of Troy, and the wooden horse?"

"Aye. Ye say ye have wooden lads below? I'll be bl. . ."

"Nay, nay, not wooden lads, though they be strong and without much brains, 'tis true. See thou here. . ."

Ybid leapt free of the now madly churning flagstones and pulled his stool up to Sark, to whisper his plans.

Those apprentice wizards had given me quite a bit of trouble. I had had about five figures which worked well as apprentices; they were slim and boylike, wearing tunics, and carrying only staffs. In the last several installments of the game, I had made them a part of the party descending into the dungeon, and had arranged for Dorothy to capture most of them. The trouble came when I started to plan for the end of the game. I was going to free all the apprentices at once, and I would need about forty figures, not just the five I had been using over and over. Painting figures takes time, and I had to start on the apprentices, as well as another figure to be used in the final battle, about two weeks in advance. The problem was to keep Dorothy from finding

them. She would inevitable wonder what I was going to do with all those apprentices, and she might even figure out my plan before I could put it to use.

At last we were ready to start the game.

"Okay," I announced, "I'm sending a bunch of guys down the south trap door."

"That's entry no. 2," Dorothy reminded me as I reached for the MicroQuest book. Entry no. 2 read as follows:

> You are in a long tunnel. You may go left (go to no. 54) or right (go to no. 39).

I knew I wanted to go right, so I went to no. 39 which I recalled correctly as the Scarlet Room, featuring an entry at each end and rows of hexagonal pillars along the walls. Dorothy was free to stock her rooms with creatures from her large supply, and she could switch around who I would meet, and where in between each of my expeditions. She produced an envelope marked "Scarlet," opened it, and began to fish figures out of her box. I set up the room on a sheet of hex paper, using cardboard markers for the pillars.

"Whom did you bring this time?" asked my opponent as she set two goblins and a basilisk down among the pillars.

"Ybid the wizard, Sergeant Sark, the Norb brothers, whom you think are useless, but who killed four of your vampires last week, and some new guys with swords."

"What, no apprentices? Seems like the only magicians you've risked in the whole game were apprentices. Maybe you've run out of them."

It was all I could do to maintain my poker face and avoid looking at the spot where I had hidden the new apprentice figures.

"Let's get on with the fight," I said, trying to change the subject.

The Norb brothers, twins, split up and stood near opposite sides of the room while Sergeant Sark directed the other warriors to form a wall around Ybid. Then the Norbs started moving along the length of the room, between the walls and the pillars. One of the goblins broke from behind a pillar and headed for Sark, the force of his charge increasing the strength of his weapons. Sark met the charge with his shield, and then stabbed the goblin beneath the ribcage. Meanwhile, Ybid was chanting and gesticulating in his corner, and soon the second goblin was beaten senseless by a magic fist. Sark finished off his goblin, and all turned their attention to the Norbs and the basilisk.

The basilisk was at bay in the middle of the room, trying to decide which Norb to go after. Then he turned towards one brother, and the other hurled his battleaxe. The weapon missed the monster, struck sparks as it hit a pillar, and fell to the floor. Now the brothers Norb were ready to use their most famous fighting method: one would duck behind a pillar as the other threw an axe. If the axe missed the basilisk, it would be retrieved by the brother behind the pillar and hurled again. Both axes flew fast, and the beast could not concentrate on attacking either brother without risking an attack from the rear by the other brother. It just stood in the middle of the chamber, ducking, dodging, and finally, was decapitated. The band regrouped, and was ready for Ybid's orders.

Ybid's orders were, of course, my orders. I was trying to get down to the jail section of the castle where all the apprentices were being held. My whole plan of battle was centered on having Ybid free the apprentices, but he had to get to them before he could free them. Naturally, I didn't want to go for my goal so directly that Dorothy would figure out what I was after and move the apprentices. As she recorded the results of the fight in the Scarlet room, my mind wandered back to when I had been painting the dozens of apprentice figures. For some reason, I don't like to have any two possesions which are identical. Dorothy says that this idea is one of my "foibles", but to me it seems reasonable. Of course, I don't count utilitarian things like socks or silverware, but when it comes to important items like wargame figures, I draw the line: each one has to be an individual in the true sense of the word. So I had to come up with forty different ways to paint the same casting, varying such details as tunic color, hair color, and eye color in such a way that no two were alike. Towards the end I was bending the figures (they are leaden) so that they would differ as to pose, since I had run out of color combinations.

Once I had the apprentices painted, there was the problem of where to store them. If I just put them on my wargame shelf Dorothy would surely see them and start wondering what I needed all those apprentices for. I solved the problem by buying a secondhand Algebra II book, hollowing it out, and placing the figures inside. There was no chance Dorothy would find them, yet they would be at hand when I needed them.

Dorothy, who had taken an awfully long time to record whatever she was recording, looked up and blandly asked: "Isn't it amazing how characters can pop right out of books?"

My stomach turned into a bowling ball and my skin shrank two sizes. How had she known.

"I mean, " she continued, "Ybid was a wizard in some fantasy story you read, and we've converted him, pointed hat and all, into a playing piece in a game."

Greatly relieved, I tried to resume my poker face.

"Yes, sweetheart, it is surprising."

"You don't sound convinced. Sorry, I shouldn't have brought it up right in the middle of the game, while you were thinking about your move. Are you all set?"

"Yeah, what are my choices from the Scarlet Room?"

She picked up the MicroQuest book and flipped the pages.

"You can either go out the far end, or down a trap door in the floor."

Actually, I knew without asking what my options were, since my previous expeditions in Castle Dubois had given me a fairly good idea of the layout. I just didn't want Dorothy to know how familiar with it I was, or to understand the purpose behind my choices.

"Going down puts you in a corridor. Left or right?"

"Right."

She flipped more pages.

"At the end of the corridor you find two staircases. Up or down?"

"Down."

More flipping.

"That brings you to the subterranean keep of Castle Dubois. You have entered the guard room, beyond which is located the locked chamber containing the apprentices. Wait a minute while I set up the guard room."

She took out a proper-sized piece of hex paper and started laying out the guard room on it, positioning furniture, doors, and weapon racks as directed by the MicroQuest book. All that was interesting, but what I really wanted to know was what kinds of guards she would put in it. I was also wondering why she had so casually let slip the fact that my apprentices were indeed in the adjoining chamber. I thought back to her seemingly innocent remark about characters coming out of books, and apprehension regripped me. Did she, somehow, know about my stockpile of apprentice figures? If so, surely she would recognize that I was planning a mass escape, since that was the only project which could require so many figures. Assuming the worst, then, she knew I had forty apprentice figures, and I was planning a breakout from her prison. But even if she *knew*, would she understand it? Could she guess my reason for wanting forty apprentices loose in Castle Dubois? It seemed to me that knowing and understanding were two different things, and I started to reflect on which was easier to come by.

I hadn't gotten very far by the time Dorothy had her guards set up. They were a surprisingly weak force, considering what they were guarding; only a couple of gargoyles, a human, and two orcs. I entered my four men-at-arms into the room, since one of the rules of the MicroQuest is that only four individuals may pass through a door in a single turn. Dorothy's gargoyles shot at them with crossbows, but missed. On my next turn, I brought in four Norb brothers.

"Four of them!" exclaimed my opponent.

I kept silent and waited for her to figure out how I could bring four Norbs onto the board when I had only taken two into the dungeon in the first place.

"Oh," she realized after a moment," they could be illusions."

"Or images," I added, since they were illusions. The difference between an image and an illusion is that an illusion can hurt you if you think it's real, and an image can't. One way to tell them apart is to shoot at the object in question: if the arrow or bolt passes through then the object is an image, but if it connects then the object is either an illusion or real.

"I wonder," murmured Dorothy, "if Ybid could summon two Norbs." Summoned figures are even stronger that images or illusions: they are really there, and can be killed only by fighting, not by disbelieving or anything else. Naturally, summoned figures don't come cheap; not only does the summoning require a wizard with a high IQ, but maintaining the summoned figure is a huge drain on his strength. Dorothy stared intently at the figures of the four Norbs, as if she could tell by looking at them which ones were real. Had she checked the rules, she would have found no spell which summons an armoured figure, so the extra Norbs had to be images or illusions.

As the four Norbs entered the room, the men-at-arms moved ahead, forcing the gargoyles to drop their crossbows and prepare for hand-to-hand combat with daggers. Incomprehensibly, the orcs stood beside the weapons rack, trading the weapons they had started off with for two maces apiece.

"Odd things, orcs," grunted Gordo Norb, "they arm before a fight and then re-arm when danger nears."

"Aye," returned his brother Orgod, "and mark ye that knave with the cudgel. Methinks he be a wizard."

True enough, the human stood by the racks also, as if about to pick a weapon, but his staff never left his hand. One of the men-at-arms cut him down before Orgod's guess was proven out.

Then the action really broke out. Sark and Ybid entered at last, and the orcs decided to attack the Norbs without waiting to figure out which were real and which weren't. Sark and the men-at-arms took on the gargoyles, and Ybid, with nothing pressing to do, stood in a corner and created a stone wall around himself. A wizard should take no unnecessary risks.

Soon the melee ended. The bodies of the guards were strewn about the guard room, at the cost of only one of Sark's men-at-arms. The rest of his contingent escaped with only minor wounds.

Dorothy and I collected our figures and got ready for my next move.

"Now," I said, "as you've probably guessed, I'm going to enter the underground keep."

"Okay, so you go in, and you find your forty apprentices, but also the amazing and fearsome Lupa."

"Who's Lupa?"

"A witch, commandante of Castle Dubious. My alter ego."

"Seems to me she's more like your alter id. She's in there, messing about with the captive apprentices, when anybody with an ego even remotely related to your own would have been in the guard room, beefing up the defense where it counted."

She laughed, but I sensed more the nervous laugh of relief than the hearty laugh of an appreciated joke. In fact, she was so relieved that I started getting worried. It would be unlike her to make such a mistake in a game, so she must have some reason for putting her Lupa in the keep. Only by getting on with the game would I be sure of finding out the reason.

"Let's set up the keep," I suggested.

Dorothy got out a huge sheet of hex paper; the keep was supposed to be the size of a

gymnasium or so. I went over to the bookshelf and got the apprentices out of the hollow math book, trying to see how much Dorothy was surprised. She didn't look very surprised, but by this time she knew I was freeing the apprentices and therefore, that I had a supply of them somewhere. Meanwhile, she had gotten out her own figures. Apparently what made Lupa so lupine was her two pet wolves, but I decided that even with the wolves and her magical powers she would not be strong enough to foil my plans. After we got everything set up, I took a chance.

"Honey, why did you put Lupa in there when she could have done so much more good in the guardroom? You're the one who's always saying never to split one's force in the presence of the enemy."

She looked a bit unsure of herself, which is unusual.

"Well, you've noticed that I've been taking notes on this game?"

"I'd noticed that you were doing a lot of paperwork over there."

"I was, and it was more than just the amount required by the game. My idea was to have a complete history of all the questing in Castle Dubious."

She was still holding something back, I could tell from her tone of voice.

"So?" I prompted.

"So I could use it as material for a story I'm writing."

It sounded harmless, but she was so apologetic that I knew I was supposed to be offended, and started wondering why. We'd gotten into this discussion when I asked why Lupa was in the keep when she should have been out in the guard room. . . . .

Then I had it.

"So I'm supposed to feel offended because you, thinking in terms of your story, were not necessarily playing the best game of Fantasy Trip you could have been? Don't be silly."

As I watched her start to breathe more easily, I realized I really did feel a little bit offended, but I couldn't say so. Who cared if she wasn't making the smartest moves? Probably I wasn't either, and for that matter, probably nobody does in a game as complex as The Fantasy Trip. Forcing a smile, I set up my figures on the board.

Looking at them, and contemplating my first move, I found I had another reason to be upset about Dorothy's story project. My characters were about to become her characters. Sark, a character whom I had spent many games building up through the system of experience points, was about to become Sark, a character living in Dorothy's story. Worse, my brilliant planning, which was Ybid's brilliant planning in terms of the story. I'm in love with her, so I couldn't demand some of the roylaties, or tell her not to write the story, but I involuntarily started wondering what kind of law, if any, forbade plagiarism of ideas from games. I tried to ignore the whole thing and finish the game.

My plan centered, obviously, on all those apprentices.

Ybid relaxed his spell on the illusionary Norbs, and they vanished. He would need all his strength in the moments to come.

"Explain to thy men what they are to do", he told Sark.

"Aye. Now heed me for a few breaths, lads. The Norbs and I will breach yon oak door with these orcish battleaxes. Beyond it are the captive apprentices. When we break in, stand fast at the threshold, neither entering nor falling back. If we can hold the breach, aye, if we can fight like true men for as long as it takes me to bellow three words, then I can promise ye we'll share in all the riches of Castle Dubois. Do ye understand?"

"All but the 'three words,' sir," said Gordo Norb. "Can ye tell us what three words, and why?"

"Nay Gordo. The walls have ears to listen; nay, in this enchanted place I don't misdoubt they have eyes to read lips."

The three men picked up the battleaxes of the dead orcs and readied themselves to demolish the door. Behind them, in reserve, the three men-at-arms, scarcely more than boys-at-arms, tried to ignore the body of their late friend as they steeled themselves for the fight. Ybid stepped into the corner beside the door. Though only the wall separated him from the prison, he could not be seen or shot at from any point inside.

"Go to it!" he whispered.

The three strong men raised their blades and in one mighty blow parted the door into a dozen sections. Before the pieces had clattered to the floor, each of the men was on the doorsill. Now their experience and drill paid off; so dextrous were they that though the swinging battleaxes formed a wall of glinting steel against the charge of Lupa's wolves, no man feared any harm from his fellows.

Inside, forty apprentice wizards looked towards the door. Some had clearly been awakened by the crash of the battleaxes, while others were simply rousing themselves from the boredom and torpor induced by long imprisonment deep underground. Lupa, wearing a blue cloak and clutching a hazel staff in her left hand, was at a loss for what to do. The apprentice wizards, boys from twelve to fourteen whom Ybid had judged to be less dull than the average, showed no initiative at all.

"AID THE WIZARD!" bellowed Sark.

At last, the boys had something to do. They all started fumbling and mumbling, trying to remember the one spell they had been taught, the Aid spell. Ones who knew it reminded the ones who had forgotten. Soon all were casting the spell, transferring their strength to Ybid. Lupa didn't catch on until far too late; then she tried to dazzle the apprentices with a blinding psychic flash, but was so rattled she muffed the spell.

In the next room, Ybid felt the strength of forty young boys flow into his old body. He felt as though he could lift a horse or topple a tower singlehanded. Instead, following his plan, he started a spell of his own, a spell which would use all his strength and that of the boys as well.

On the threshold, Sark held the wolves at bay. He didn't dare look back, but he could sense the green haze behind him in the guard room, looming thicker and thicker as Ybid worked his magic. The fog coalesced, the droplets shining brighter and brighter until the dense cloud was completely opaque, a looming, shimmering statue of. . . a dragon!

The wolves lost control and bolted, tails between their legs. The Norbs sagged in the doorway when they turned and saw the beast. The men-at-arms cattered and the weakening apprentices tried to grin bravely as they watched what their strength had permitted Ybid to create. This was no image or illusion, this was a summoned, real, dragon!

Sark and Ybid leaped astride its neck, and Ybid prodded it to life with his staff. As it lumbered forward, Lupa stood alone in the middle of the prison chamber and tried desperately to disbelieve in the dragon, convinced no wizard could have the strength to summon a real one. After a few tries, she stared wide-eyed at the weakening apprentices and understood.

"By Jove, it's real!" she screamed to the echoing walls of the chamber. "But it'll never catch me where I'm going." With that she opened a trap door and dived through it.

Afterwards, there wasn't much to the battle. Ybid and Sark rode through the castle on the dragon. As it clawed or burnt the terrified guards to death, the apprentices continued the Aid spell to give Ybid the strength he needed to maintain the dragon-summoning spell. As some apprentices passed out from loss of strength, others took over for them and the dragon moved on.

After the dragon's first few encounters with the defenders, Dorothy admitted Ybid and Sark could sack the whole castle, and conceded the game. We looked at each other over the collection of figures, sheets of hexpaper, dice and rulebooks. My opponent-sweetheart tidied her pile into a neat stack and started packing her equipment up.

"Hmmm," I hummed, "that wasn't a bad game."

"No, not bad at all, though obviously I was surprised by your use of a battery of apprentice wizards."

"Large numbers of cheap units are usually better than small numbers of costly units."

"Like the business with the GEVs in O-GRE."

"Exactly."

"And even though I lost, I've collected bales of material for my story. I think that these notes tell me everything we did in the whole campaign."

We had all her stuff in the box again, and I opened the door for her.

"Call me if you need any help reconstructing the game."

"Okay," she said, "but even if I do remember everything we did, I bet I'll call you anyway. Just because I'll know it, doesn't mean I'll understand it."

We kissed goodbye. After she left, I started thinking about knowing as opposed to understanding, but got sidetracked into wondering whether I understood Dorothy just because I knew her. I never did figure out the general relationship between the two ideas.

MERCENARY

a review
by
TONY WATSON

GDW's science-fiction game TRAVELLER is fast becoming one of the most popular role playing games available, the perennial D&D not withstanding. Perhaps then, it was almost inevitable that the hunger for additional rules and material these games engender in their players, would crop up with TRAVELLER. MERCENARY (TRAVELLER Book 4) is an attempt to satisfy this want.

Mercenaries have been a standard feature of SF for many years. This book is an attempt to bring this aspect, as well a generally more comprehensive military system, to the game.

The people at GDW have come up with a fairly clever system for supplementing the original game of three volumes. Publications concerned with TRAVELLER will be of two types: Books and Supplements, one of each having appeared so far. The former are merely aids to the referee, saving him some time, but essentially offering no new rules. The existing 'supplement', 1001 CHARACTERS, is just that: a listing of non-player characters, divided by service, giving characteristics, skills and material possessions. The book serves as a great aid to the referee who needs to come up with some non-playing characters in a hurry and doesn't have the time to go through the normal generation process.

'Books', however, are quite a different thing. These are full-fledged rules volumes, containing new material. Such is the case with MERCENARY.

If you are running a campaign and have found the original rules for Army and Marine types to be a bit lacking, or you wish to emmulate any of the heroic exploits of countless other mercenaries appearing in the pages of SF, this volume is perfect for you. However, if you are looking for more in depth space combat or new material for world creation, then this book will have only a secondary value for you. It deals exclusively with the subject of its title.

The rules to MERCENARY add to, supplant and amend some of the original TRAVELLER material, and have a greater emphasis on military matters.

One of the major changes in the new volume is the process for generating characters of the Army and Marine services. While generally similar to the original, it is considerably more complex.

After enlisting in either the Army or Marine services, the player must choose a specific arm of that organization. Army sub-categories include the Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, and Support. Marine categories are more limited, just Infantry and Support. Players then gain a basic training skill of Gun Combat 1, and an advanced skill dependent on the roll of a die and consulting a table for each arm. After this initial segment, each term is divided into four, single year, segments (basic training comprises the first year of the first term). Each of these segments is resolved via a number of die rolls.

First, a die roll is made for general assignment, with the possibility of a command position being available for an officer occuring or a special assignment, such as cross training or commando school, cropping up.

Then, a specific assignment is rolled for, consulting a seperate column for each arm. The results range from garrison to counter-insurgency, with a variety of others between.

Once the specific assignment has been determined, die rolls are made for survival, the chances of promotion and decoration, and

acquired skill, with the numbers needed depending on the arm of service and the type of assignment. As one might expect, the die roll required for survival in a raid situation is higher than for garrison duty, but the chances for decoration, promotion and skill are much better.

If a player accrues a skill for that year, he may roll on one of two charts, the Military Occupational Specialty table emphasizing skills associated with the arm or service, or the Skill Table, which offers a broader variety as well as chanced to improve the character's basic makeup. The skills list offered in MERCENARY is considerably expanded over that in TRAVELLER; skills such as "Zero-G Combat", "Recruiting" and "Recon" are now possible.

Once a player figures he has had enough of the military life, he may muster out, using the same rules as in TRAVELLER for the procedure.

The next major section of the rulebook deals with "tickets" or the contracts, made between mercenary groups and their employers. Tickets address such essentials as the nature of the mission, weapons to be used and who provides them, and, of course, payment for services rendered.

Players who do not have their own bands may attempt to join any group they encounter, the success of the attempt determined by a die roll, modified for prior service and any skills pertinent to the mission at hand that the applicant might possess. Further tables list the salary the mercenary can expect and the number of "shares" or percentage of any final profit, he will receive. In addition, an explanation of the duties and position of each rank is included. This section concludes with five examples of tickets. These should give the referee a number of ideas of his own.

The next major area addressed is recruiting. This is for the player characters who wish to organize their own mercenary group. The number of recruits available, and their quality (raw recruits, veterans or mercenaries) is determined by die roll, modified by the planet's tech, law, and government levels. Players then train the recruits (this is where instructional skills come in very handy) and organize them into fire teams, squads and on up to battalions. Morale is figured for each team, considering such variables as terms served by its members, and any decorations awarded. A host of minor rules follow, addressing such things as heavy weapons and support and maintenance personnel.

The purpose of a mercenary organization is fighting, and the MERCENARY rules offer three ways to handle battles. The first system builds on the basic personal combat system given in TRAVELLER, adding some modifications to cover the slightly different situations and weapons existing in military confrontations. The Abstract System is just that, a group of charts and tables to be used in resolving combats on a unit to unit basis with a few die rolls. The third system is the Free Form system, which is very much as the name implies since only a brief paragraph follows. The referee is pretty much left to his own devices when using this system.

The last sixteen pages of the fifty-two page rulesbook are devoted to weaponry and appropriately tagged "Ironmongery". For those who were dissappointed with the rather mundane nature of the weapons in TRAVELLER, MERCENARY may be the cure. The nature of the weapons included in this volume is decidedly futuristic and very lethal. A number of new, small arms are included, such as the electro-magnetic Gauss rifle and the Snub pistol, used especially for shipboard actions. There are also some high energy weapons (with the emphasis on high---these weapons are *very* nasty) in the form of plasma and fusion guns. There is a variety of new support weapons and grenade launchers, plus a complete listing of field artillery from simple mortars and howitzers on up to mass driver guns and Meson accelerators.

The volume ends with the combat charts neccessary to include the plethora of new weapons into the TRAVELLER combat system.

Over all, MERCENARY is a good effort, worthy of the game it supplements. Players and referees who have an inclination towards the more martial aspect of the game should be sure and include the book into their campaigns.

The only drawback to MERCENARY is its relatively high price; $5.98 for the single volume.

MERCENARY, designed by Frank Chadwick, is available from GDW at 203 North Street, Normal, Illinois.

SPELLMAKER & QUEST

two reviews by Norman S. Howe

Heritage Models, Inc., under the name of Gametime Games, has entered the family game market with six excellent products. The games are intended for 2-4 or 6 players, and run about an hour each (based on the two I've seen). They cost $9.95 and are packaged in hard boxes 12" square and 2" deep. Each game includes a thick, mounted playing board (sturdier even than a Parker Brothers map), play counters like Battleline, and rules. The graphics are excellent

SPELLMAKER has an unusual fantasy background. A princess has been captured by a dragon, and 2 to 4 wizards are trying to "rescue" her, carrying her to their castles. They accomplish this by means of various minions under their control, including Giants, Princes, Dwarfs, Frogs, and Toadstools. Each turn, the wizard may cause one of his characters to move through the forest by normal means, or he may cast a spell. Spells may be used to transport characters magically, to create or destroy characters (those of the wizard or of an opponent), to transform characters to other forms, or to nullify another wizard's spells. The princess will follow anyone who approaches her. When characters meet, they may engage in combat at the start of the next turn. As the game progresses, we see the princess being led hither and yon by a bewildering array of creatures which change from moment to moment. Only by clever play can a wizard succeed in carrying off the princess and winning the game.

The SPELLMAKER board depicts a forest with trails and clearings. A character may move normally from one clearing to the next along a trail. Alternately, a Transport spell may move him from one Magical Domain to the next, thus crossing two spaces. Combat occurs at the start of a player-turn, and is by simple elimination: Giants kill Princes, Princes kill Dwarfs, and so to the Toadstool, which poisons a Giant, but which may be destroyed by anything else. Toadstools may not be moved. Each player has three counters of each type, though he begins the game with only one of each on the board. Spells are cast by a play of cards, which depict the different types of characters in the game. Thus, if Red wishes to move a Prince by magic, he must play a Red Prince card. To destroy a Black Frog, he must play a Black Frog card and a Null card. Null cards allow the creation or destruction of characters and the nullification of spells. To transform a Frog to a Prince, a Frog card and a Prince card of the target's color must be played. Wizards replenish their hands after playing cards.

SPELLMAKER is a very exciting game, but much too well-balanced. Whenever one player starts to win the others gang up on him and obliterate his pieces. Which is, of course, entirely appropriate for Wizards.

QUEST is a game about the Knights of the Round Table. The object of QUEST is for the Knights to go forth from Camelot on specific quests which they must complete before returning. The game ends 10 turns after the first knight returns to his place. During their quests, the knights may encounter adventure and danger, which may give them wounds, but also provide opportunities to perform Feats of Arms. They may also acquire magical Talismans which will aid them in combat. When the game ends, the knight who has returned to Camelot with his Quest complete and the largest number of Feats of Arms is accounted the Greatest Knight in the World.

The gameboard represents Camelot and its surroundings, including the 8 Quest spaces. The spaces are rectangles of varying size, as in KINGMAKER, to represent terrain effects. Each Knight is depicted by a pair of counters set back to back upright on a base. Quests are selected by drawing chits. Other chits, numbered 1-12, are used for resolving combat and discovering Treasure and Feats of Arms. Low numbers are good in the first case and bad in the second. Feats of Arms and Talismans can be used to reduce encounter results; Wounds increase the number. Wounds also reduce movement allowance, which is normally 3. A knight may recover from wounds by resting. A knight suffering 3 wounds is immediately returned to Camelot to start over. Each turn a knight moves, he must risk an Encounter, either with the object of his quest, another Knight, or with someone unknown, as determined by a card deck. Encounter cards bear an Encounter track, numbered 1-12 and showing 0-3 wounds for various results, and a Feat of Arms track showing points or treasures received. A chart is provided for Quest encounters. To fight another knight, encounter modifications are compared and each knight draws a chit. The winnner has the lower total, inflicts a wound on the loser, and gains a Feat of Arms.

There is one error in the Rules: Camelot is described differently from its appearance on the map. The rules state it has 13 chairs; the map shows only 6. The correct appearance should be: A square 5 spaces on a side. The three spaces showing Merlin, Arthur, and Guinevere are the top, center edge of the square. The 13 chairs are placed on the corners and the other 3 sides of the square.

QUEST is DUNGEON taken outdoors. For so simple a game, it is surprisingly true to the Arthurian legend.

News & Plugs

GAMING CONVENTIONS:

CANGAMES '79: (May 18-21) Ottawa University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. GoH: Gary Gygax. The major Canadian gaming con with tournaments in every aspect of gaming along with seminars, films, and a auction. Mem: $10. Info: Cangames '79, 201-360 Dundas St. Vanier, Ontario, Canada, K1L 7W7.

GENGHIS CON: (May 25-28) Cosmopolitan Hotel, Denver, CO. Genghis Con is a part of Penulticon. Features will include tournaments, open gaming, movies, and panels. Mem: $10. A membership in Genghis Con also admits you to Penulticon. Info: Denver Gaming Assn., 4825 S. Sherman St., Englewood, CO 80211.

MICHICON VIII: (June 1-3) Oakland University, Detroit, MI. A very professional con with the usual tournaments, films, seminars, and exhibits. Info: Metro Detroit Games, 2616 Kenwyck, Troy, MI 48098.

XON-CON: (June 2-3) Knights of Columbus Hall, Dixon, IL. Tournaments include D&D, Runequest, MicroGames, miniatures, boardgames, and much more. Info: call (815) 284-3254.

DINO-CON: (June 16-17) Dunfey's Royal Coach Inn, San Mateo, CA. Features will include tournaments, a major home computer exhibit, and several SF authors will be in attendence. Info: Dino-Con, 22195 Redwood Road, Castro Valley, CA 94580.

WARGY 10: (June 23-24) Wargy will have computer demonstrations and games, plus the usual board, fantasy and diplomatic games. Info: Rick Plankton, RR6 Box 52, Columbus, NE 68601.

CWA-Con: (July 21-22) Loyola University, Chicago, IL. The agenda includes tournaments in both board and FRP games along with contests in miniatures painting. Info: Chicago Wargamer's Assn., 3605 Bobolink, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008.

GEN CON XII: (August 16-19) University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Kenosha, Wisconsin. One of the major cons. Sponsored by TSR, GenCon features trophies and cash prizes in all the tournaments along with the usual exhibits, panels, and demonstrations.

WINTERCON VIII: (Nov. 16-18) The winter version of MichiCon. WinterCon is sponsored by the Metro Detroit Gamers (probably the best gaming club in the country) and the con has all the usual features. Info: MDG, 2616 Kenwyck, Troy, MI 48098.

NANCON 88-II: June 30 and July 1, at the Houston Marriott. Largest Dungeons and Dragons Tournament in the southwest. Two Day Admission: $5.00 until June 1 ($6.00 after June 1). Dealers Room. Seminars on Sunday. For information or early registration contact: Nan's Toys and Games - 1385 Galleria Mall - 5015 Westheimer - Houston, Texas 77056 (A/C 713-622-0760 after 5:00 PM CST). Room Reservations through Houston Marriott - 2100 So. Braeswood - Houston, TX 77025 (mention NANCON for rooms in gaming area). See you there! (Frank Joines)

METAGAMING — NANCON

Metagaming will sponsor the following tournaments at the Houston NANCON.

1. OGRE/G.E.V.: At least three rounds of play. Cash prizes of $100 plus additional products.
2. Mixed MicroGame tournament (CHITIN:I, BLACK HOLE and INVASION OF THE AIR EATERS): At least three rounds with cash prizes of $100 plus product prizes.

For all tournaments: Chess clocks will be used in some rounds. Other games may use 3-min. egg timers to control time use.

There will be a $1.00 entry fee for each Metagaming tournament. Rulings of the judges will be final. Uncooperative players will be evicted from the tournament at the judges discretion.

SF CONVENTIONS:

KUBLA KHANCEPTION: (May 18-20) Quality Inn Parkway, Nashville, TN. Guest of Honor: Frank Robinson. Membership: $10. For information write: c/o Ken Moore, 647 Devon Dr., Nashville, TN 37720.

JUST IMAGICON: (May 25-27) Holiday Inn Rivermont, Memphis, TN. GoH: Theodore Sturgeon. Mem: $15. Info: c/o Louis Armour, 4475 Martha Cole, Memphis, TN 38118.

V-CON 7: (May 25-27) Gage Towers, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. GoH: Jack Vance, Toast Master: Frank Herbert. Info: V-Con 7, PO Box 48701, Bentall Station, Vancouver, BC, Canada V7X 1 A6.

PENULTICON: (May 25-28) Cosmopolitan Hotel, Denver, CO. GoH: C.J. Cherryh & Samuel R. Delany. Fan GoH: Don & Maggie Thompson. Mem: $10. Info: Penulticon, Box 11545, Denver, CO 80211.

DISCLAVE '79: (May 25-28) Sheraton Park Hotel, Washington, DC. GoH: Roger Zelazny. Mem: $6. Info: Disclave '79, c/o Alan Huff, 2004 Erie St. no. 2, Adelphi, MD 20783.

BETADRACHONIS: (June 15-17) Downtown Ramada Inn, Toronta, Ontario, Canada. GoH: Frederik Pohl. Mem: $8 advance, $10 at the door. Make checks payable to Dragon Star. Info: R.C. Meredith, 2041 Millway Gate, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, LRL 1R3.

HOUSTON CON: (June 21-24) Shamrock Hilton, Houston, TX. GoH: William Gaines. Info: Houston Con, PO Box 12613, Houston, TX 77087.

MIDWESTCON: (June 22-24) Cincinnati, OH. An informal con that lacks a program, but accents parties and movies. Info: Lou Tabakow, 3953 St. Johns Terrace, Cincinnati, OH 45236.

WESTERCON 32: (June 29- July 2) Sheraton Palace, San Francisco, CA. GoH: Richard Lupoff, Fan GoH: Bruce Pelz. Mem: $7.50. Info: Westercon 32, 195 Alhambra St. no. 9, San Francisco, CA 94123.

ARCHON III: (July 13-15) Airport Hilton Inn, St. Louis, MO. GoH: Joe Haldeman. Mem: $5 til 7/1, $8 after. Info: Archon, PO Box 15852, Overland, MO 63114.

DARKOVER GRAND COUNCIL MEETING: (July 13-15) La Guardia Sheraton, New York, NY. GoH: Marion Zimmer Bradley (who else). Mem: $10 till 7/1, $15 after. Info: Judy Gerjuoy, Armida Council, PO Box 355, Brooklyn, NY 11219.

DEEPSOUTHCON: (July 20-22) Le Pavillion Hotel, New Orleans, LA. GoH: R.A. Lafferty. Mem: $10. Info: Sons of the Sand, Ltd., 1903 Dante St., New Orleans, LA 70118.

OKON '79: (July 21-22) Mayo Hotel, Tulsa, OK. GoH: Jack Williamson, C.J. Cherryh, James Gunn, Bob Tucker. Mem: $6.50 till 7/1, $8 after. Info: Okon '79, PO Box 4229, Tulsa, OK 74104.

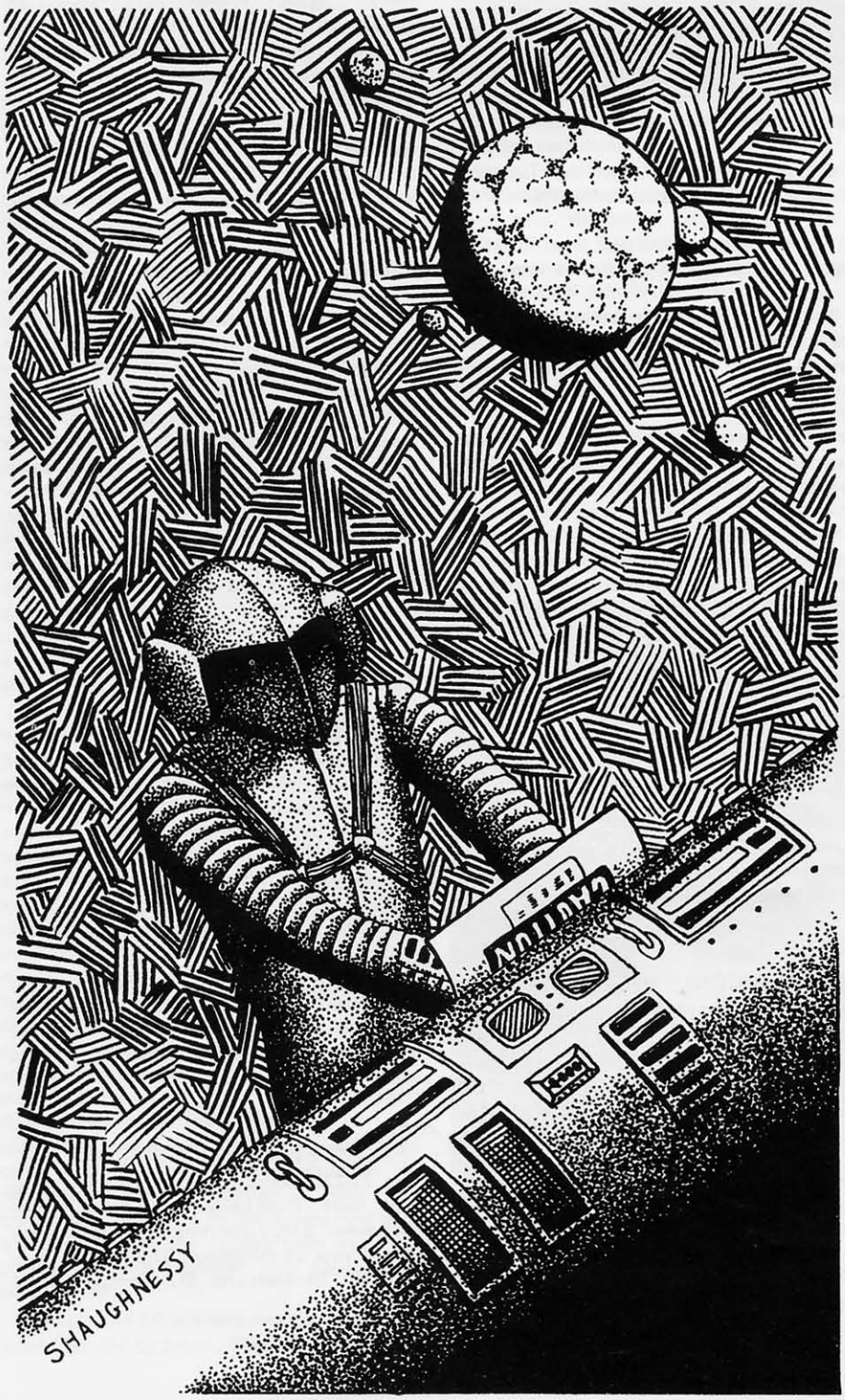
SEACON 37th WORLD SF CON: (August 23-27) Metropole Hotel, Brighton, England. GoH: Fritz Leiber, Brian Aldiss. Attending mem: $15, supporting mem: (this allows you to vote on the Hugos) $7.50. Info: Seacon '79, 14 Henrietta St., London, WC2E 80J, UK.

NORTHAMERICON: (August 30 - Sept.3) Galt House, Louisville, KY. GoH: Frederik Pohl. Mem: $10 till 6/30, $15 after. Info: NorthAmericon, PO Box 58009, Louisville, KY 40258.

GAMING NEWS:

The annual readers' poll in GAMES & PUZZLES, the prestigious British magazine (Subs 4/$6, make checks payable to Punch Publications Ltd., Watling St., Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK2 2BW, England) rated the games of 1978 in this order: no. 1 Kingmaker, no. 2 Diplomacy, no. 3 Dungeons & Dragons, no. 4 Black Box, no. 5 "1829", no. 6 Scrabble, no. 7 Acquire and Risk (tie), no. 9 Hare & Tortoise, and no. 10 Cluedo.

Andromeda Foundation Under Investigation: The open line column of the Valley News, Van Nuys, California recently tried to help Phillip Skochinski of Granada Hills. Philip failed to get an order from The Andromeda Foundation, also doing business as Galaxy Foundation Games. The Open Line column (a consumer aid column) received the same response and contacted Clyde Robinson, Postal Inspector for Denver. Mr. Robinson launched an investigation of the company, and said that the investigation "is to determine whether the firm has obtained money from customers under false pretentions." Others who have had problems with Andromeda can contact Mr. Robinson at Box 329, Denver, CO 80301. Our thanks to Gerry Thompson for this item. In general, contacting the Postal Inspector in the city where a firm does business is the best approach to take when dealing with mail order companys.



Shining Light Unlimited, a news play-by-mail club, is a Christian wargame club. They plan to publish their own journal, hold PBM tournaments, and members will receive special discounts on wargaming products. Info: send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Shining Light Unlimited, PO Box 2095, Maryland Heights, MO 63043.

GDW has announced a number of new releases. They include Double Star: space warfare in a binary star system, Animal Encounters: this addition to the TRAVELLER books contains tables of beasts to populate the worlds of the Traveller universe. Also, a new publication, The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society, will cover Traveller and other SF games. This magazine should debut in June.

Ursine Engineering has announced that Swordplay is now available in a new, improved second edition, and The Conquest of Space Rules Update no. 1 has just been issued.

The tournament winners at WarCon V in Metagaming games were: for Ice War, Armando Nart, Randolph King, and Mark A. Babic; for Stellar Conquest, Steve Jackson, Don Holson Corwyn Prater, Jay Rudin; for Ogre/GEV, Russell de Castrongrene, David Rea, Jay Rudin, John Westover, Mike Arms, Ray Morgan, Craig Spicer.

Robert F. Littlefield is willing to pay someone $10 for a copy of TSG no.12. Info: PSC no.1 Box 5254, APO SF 96286.

SF NEWS:

Robert Heinlein has finished a new novel. Several publishers are interested in the book, and a record price will probably be paid to obtain the rights to the novel.

The Fantasy Trip
MELEE

MicroGame 3 $2.95

NONE DARE A WIZARD. . . . .

With fiery eyes, a shadowy figure raises his staff and points. To stand in his way is to risk the horror of his spells. Now you can be a wizardly master of magic. You create your own character, the Wizard, in this fantasy role playing game. You select his strength needed to power spells, his dexterity for speed and accuracy, and his I.Q. to master spells. Then, you put him in magical struggle against other masters of the black arts.

WIZARD is the magical combat system from Metagaming's THE FANTASY TRIP game system. These rules are completely compatible with THE FANTASY TRIP: MELEE rules. Both sets of rules may be used together in an expanded game.

WIZARD tests your skills and imagination. Create illusory beings. Throw lightning bolts. Call up monsters and fighters. Create fire, turn missiles, or fly. A full range of enchantments are possible. As a Wizards gains experience, he can add ever more to his list of mastered spells. Until, in time, he becomes a mage without peer, feared by all.

Components include:
- *24 page rules booklet
- *12" x 14" play board
- *Two counter sheets of monsters and men

COMES A HERO. . . . .

The hero brave dominates fantasy--whether he's the muscle-bound barbarian brandishing the two-handed sword or using the cunning speed of rapier; he's a fighter through and through. This is the fantasy role-playing game where you create, and fight your own hero.

MELEE is a game of man-to-man combat with archaic weapons. Each counter represents a single warrior, with his own individually determined strength and dexterity. Players choose weapons and tactics for their fighters, and send them into combat against men, beasts, or monsters. . to victory or death.

MELEE is part of THE FANTASY TRIP. Metagaming's new fantasy role-playing system. It can be used as a combat system for any other fantasy game or you can play out individual combats for their own sake.

MELEE takes sword-play out of the books and onto the gameboard. Pick your shield, don your armor and heft a weapon from the rack. The MELEE is about to begin. . .

Components include:
- *24 page rules book
- *8¼" x 14" arena map
- *68 play counters

MELEE and WIZARD are available at your local hobby, toy, or book stores--ask for them. MELEE is $2.95 and WIZARD is $3.95 when ordered directly from Metagaming. Subscribers to THE SPACE GAMER pay $2.50 for MELEE and $3.50 for WIZARD. Each order requires a 50-cent postage charge.

Metagaming
Box 15346, Austin, TX 78761

A flood at the Putnam warehouse damaged and destroyed several stocks of SF books. While all the remaining copies of WATCHTOWER by Elizabeth Lynn, CATACOMB YEARS by Michael Bishop, and VECTOR ANALYSIS by Jay Haldeman were destroyed, their initial shipments to bookstores had already gone out. Others books completely destroyed by the flood include STRANGERS, UP THE WALLS OF THE WORLD, THE TWO OF THEM, THE STARS IN SHROUD, MOTHERLINES, BLIND VOICES, and THE AVATAR. If you are a collector, all of these books were made instant collector's items by the flood.

The two news articles above appeared in the February issue of LOCUS, the newspaper of the science fiction field. We highly recommend you subscribe to LOCUS since it is an excellent source of news and events concerning science fiction. Single issue $1, subs 12/$9. LOCUS Publications, PO Box 3938, San Francisco, CA 94119.

Austin's Lisa Tuttle has sold the novelization STORMS OF WINDHAVEN. She will write the novel with George R.R. Martin, and publication is expected in late 1979.

Rumors have it that Conde Nast is considering selling or discontinuing the publication of ANALOG. According to an Austin source, Conde Nast is simply tired of the magazine and its low circulation.

Several SF oriented films are due for release soon. Included are MOONRAKER, the new James Bond movie, set for a July 4th premiere; ALIEN, a suspense thriller, should debut in June; THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME, a re-make of the H.G. Wells classic, is expected in theatres in May; and METEOR, should hit in early October.

SF on the small screen should be very easy to find soon. BRAVE NEW WORLD, THE LATHE OF HEAVEN, and THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES are all in the final stages of production.

THINGS THAT CAME IN THE MAIL:

THE DRAGON no. 23: TSR's house organ, but included are an article on En Garde, a feature on the actual weight of armor and swords, along with a piece of fiction by Gardner Fox. Other subjects covered are a variation on psionic combat, water adventures in MA, and charts on determining the permanent effects of wounds in certain role-playing games. Single issue $2, subs 13/$24. PO Box 110, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

WHITE DWARF no. 11: This excellent British zine (published by Games Workshop) has its major emphasis on D&D and FRP games. Often considered the British equivalent of the Dragon, WD has articles on fire-arms for Traveller, humanoid variations for Starships & Spacemen, and a regular column that suggests additions for your dungeon. Also, included in this issue is a bar-room brawl, D&D style. This bar-room brawl is a complete mini-game, and it is done in a very delightful style. Single issue $2, subs 6/$12. 1 Dalling Rd., Hammersmith, London W6.

DIFFERENT WORLD no. 1: A very impressive first issue for this FRP oriented zine. The features are intelligent and well balanced among all the FRP games. For the novice, the Beginner's Brew is an excellent introduction to FRP games and Role-Playing offers a complete game and a detailed analysis of how the game is played. The major article "My life and Role-Playing" features 13 well-known people in the field discussing how role-playing has effected them, and where they feel the hobby is going. Highly recommended. Single issue $1.75, subs 6/$9. PO Box 6302, Albany, CA 94706.

THE APPRENTICE no. 3: An unpretentious zine accenting medieval fantasy gaming. The editor sets a very natural and down-to-earth tone for his magazine, and this is reflected in the articles, which include a feature on combat training for player-characters, a weather system, wines and their effects, plus a mini-adventure scenario fold-out. Single issue $1, subs 6/$5.50. 24 Sequin St., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1J 6P3.

THE GRENADIER no. 5: This well-produced zine is still finding itself. Published by GDW, the major emphasis has been on WWII games, but the editors will soon expand the range of articles to include FRP and SF games. The columns by Marc Miller and Frank Chadwick are superb. A high potential zine. Single issue $1.50, subs 4/$5. PO Box 432, Normal, IL 61761.

WIZARD's NOTEBOOK no. 2: This mimeo is the newsletter of the Dixon, Illinois Fantasy/SF Society. The emphasis is on SF and FRP games, and gamers in the Dixon area would find WN of the most interest. Subs 12/$3, PO Box 162, Dixon, IL 61021.

SWABBERS no. 62: I like this zine, although it is a bit difficult to determine the fact from fiction at times. Issue no. 62 had articles on The Battles for the Ardennes and Rommel & Tunisia, along with reviews of All-Star Wrestling, Operation Typhoon, and Iceberg of Doom. The primary emphasis is historical games, with some news of the hobby, and a feature on integrated circuits. A curious amateur zine, but quite enjoyable. Subs 6/$4, PO Box 44, Tiffin, IL 52340.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Metagaming highly recommends that you obtain a single issue of a magazine before you subscribe to it.

OGRE Tournament

Twenty-two gamers entered the OGRE tournament at Warcon V, competing for $100 in cash prizes and an assortment of Metagaming freebies.

OGRE's designer, Steve Jackson, refereed the three-round tournament. The first two rounds were played straight-from-the-book, using the advanced OGRE scenario. Each participant played defense in one round, and the Ogre in the other. Completion of the assigned mission (that is, destruction of the CP for the Ogre, or saving it for the defender) was worth 1,000 points. Destroyed enemy units were scored as in G.E.V. The loser's victory points were subtracted from the winner's to give the winner's score for the round; thus, winning the game counted most heavily, but *how well* you won was also important.

The top six scorers advanced to the third round. Five of these had won both of their games so far; the sixth had lost one game by a narrow margin and won the other decisively. The top two seeded players faced each other, then the next two, then the last two. Seedings were based on scoring from the first two rounds.

The third round was a "hybrid" game, and tested the players' ability to adapt to a new scenario quickly. The game was played on the GEV map, and was based on the "Ceasefire Breakdown" scenario. Each player started with 20 armor units, 30 points of infantry, and a Mark III Ogre, as well as the two CPs from the scenario. The only GEV rules used were the terrain effects; players had the option of using mobile howitzers and light tanks from GEV, or sticking with the units used in OGRE. Other than that, the original OGRE rules were used - i.e., no stacking, no overruns, etc. The games were played against a time-clock; each player was allotted an hour. Using up your hour before your opponent did cost a 50-point penalty; only one of the three games finished "on time". In one of the other two games, the winner defeated his opponent after using up his time and taking the penalty.

Third-round scoring was straight out of GEV, with a 50-point penalty for using up your hour first and a 50-point penalty for retreating any unit off the map.

Russell de Castongrene and David Rea came in first and second, respectively; the last round did not affect their positions significantly. Third place was taken by Jay Rudin. Jay defeated Mike Arms convincingly in Round 3, dropping Mike from third place to fifth in the final scoring. John Westover moved up from fifth place after Round 2 to fourth in the final scoring by defeating Ray Morgan, who ended Round 3 in sixth place where he had started.

First place was worth $50; second was good for $30, and third, $20. First through sixth place also received 6-month subscriptions to TSG or chose from various other prizes, including OGRE Mark V miniatures and Micro-Games.

MICRO SUBSCRIPTIONS

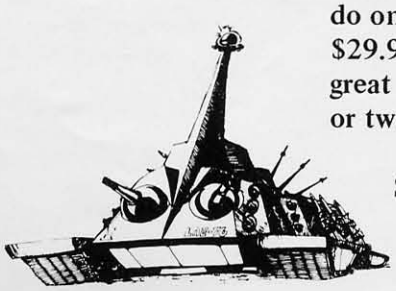
Now – by popular request – gamers can SUBSCRIBE to Metagaming's MicroGames! You don't have to look for them in stores, or place a new order every couple of months . . . now you can get each MicroGame and MicroQuest AUTOMATICALLY – as soon as it's released!

The Micro Subscription will bring you every newly published MicroGame and MicroQuest. It WON'T bring you old Micros already in print – nor will it bring you expansion sets or play-aids released in Micro-sized packages. Just new, complete games straight from the designers, and exciting new adventures from The Fantasy Trip.

Remember the exciting fantasy and s-f game adventures you've already seen in the MicroGames? Well, there's more to come. More science fiction and fantasy – and, by mid-1979, Metagaming will be publishing MicroGames with modern and historical themes as well.

And – as an added bonus – the Micro Subscription rates are figured on the basis of a $2.95 cover price. Since some Micros are larger (and priced at $3.95) you get an extra break: the bigger games at the same low price!

Subscribe today. The price is right . . . only $19.95 for the next six Micros, or $36.95 for the next TWELVE – delivered to your door. And subscribers to THE SPACE GAMER still get a discount, as they do on all Metagaming products: 6 Micros for $15.95, or 12 for $29.95. (And if you're not subscribing to TSG, think about it. Six great issues of the best in science-fiction and fantasy gaming for $8, or twelve for $15 – plus the great TSG subscriber discounts!)



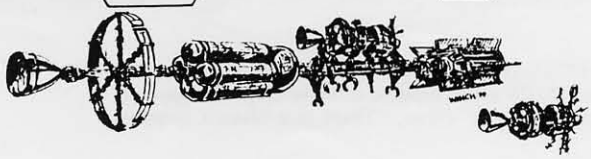
Send your order today – and get ready to have fun!

Please send me a Micro Subscription for the next ..... MicroGames and MicroQuests. I (am) (am not) a subscriber to *The Space Gamer.*

Please send me ..... issues of *The Space Gamer.* I understand that this qualifies me for TSG discounts on all Metagaming products, including those I am ordering now.

Enclosed is my check for $.....

Metagaming



Box 15346
Austin, TX 78761

THEY WANT OUR AIR. . . .

It's 1983 and our air is going bad. An alien generation ship invades earth with fantastic weapons and Air converters. These survivors from another star are remaking Terra to suit their needs despite "indigenous biological activity". Mankind's back is against the wall---we must win or die gasping.

INVASION OF THE AIR EATERS is a grand strategic level simulation of the Alien invasion of Earth in the 1980's for two players. Alien units are single vehicles or complexes, each run by several Aliens. Terran armies represent 3000-6000 tanks, several hundred combat aircraft, and 300,000 to 800,000 men. Terran submarine fleets represent 30-50 attack subs. Solitaire play is made possible by adding a pre-planned, alien assault. Multi-player scenario is also possible with each player controlling a national grouping. Advanced rules introduce oil, repair, nuclear attacks, air forces, and other concepts.

Components include:
- *24 page rules booklet
- *12" x 14" map of the world
- *135 play counters

"GOD" IS RESTLESS. . . .

Amtik the god had a problem. The universe was internal to his 400,000km long self. He was "god" to the universes inhabitants. Unfortunately, only the Holy Band truly believed in Amtik's existance.

Amtik was in danger! The Sun-Throwers were hurling stars at his universe sensor ducts. The Holy Band wanted his divine intervention. A sun in the ducts would dissipate poor Amtik and free his creations. While the Holy Band mightily struggled to believe and triumph, Amtik might even get bored and "turn-off" his universe--is a puzzlement.

HOLY WAR is a three dimensional space combat game for two players. The game contains numerous ship types, unique victory conditions, and map and movement similar to that of GODSFIRE.

Components include:
- *24 page rules booklet
- *135 unit counters
- *12" x 14" map

INVASION OF THE AIR EATERS and HOLY WAR are available at your local hobby, toy, and book stores--ask for them. Both are $2.95 when ordered directly from Metagaming. Subscribers to THE SPACE GAMER pay $2.50 for either. There is a 50-cent required postage fee for each mail order.

Metagaming
Box 15346, Austin, TX 78761